BLUEPRINT

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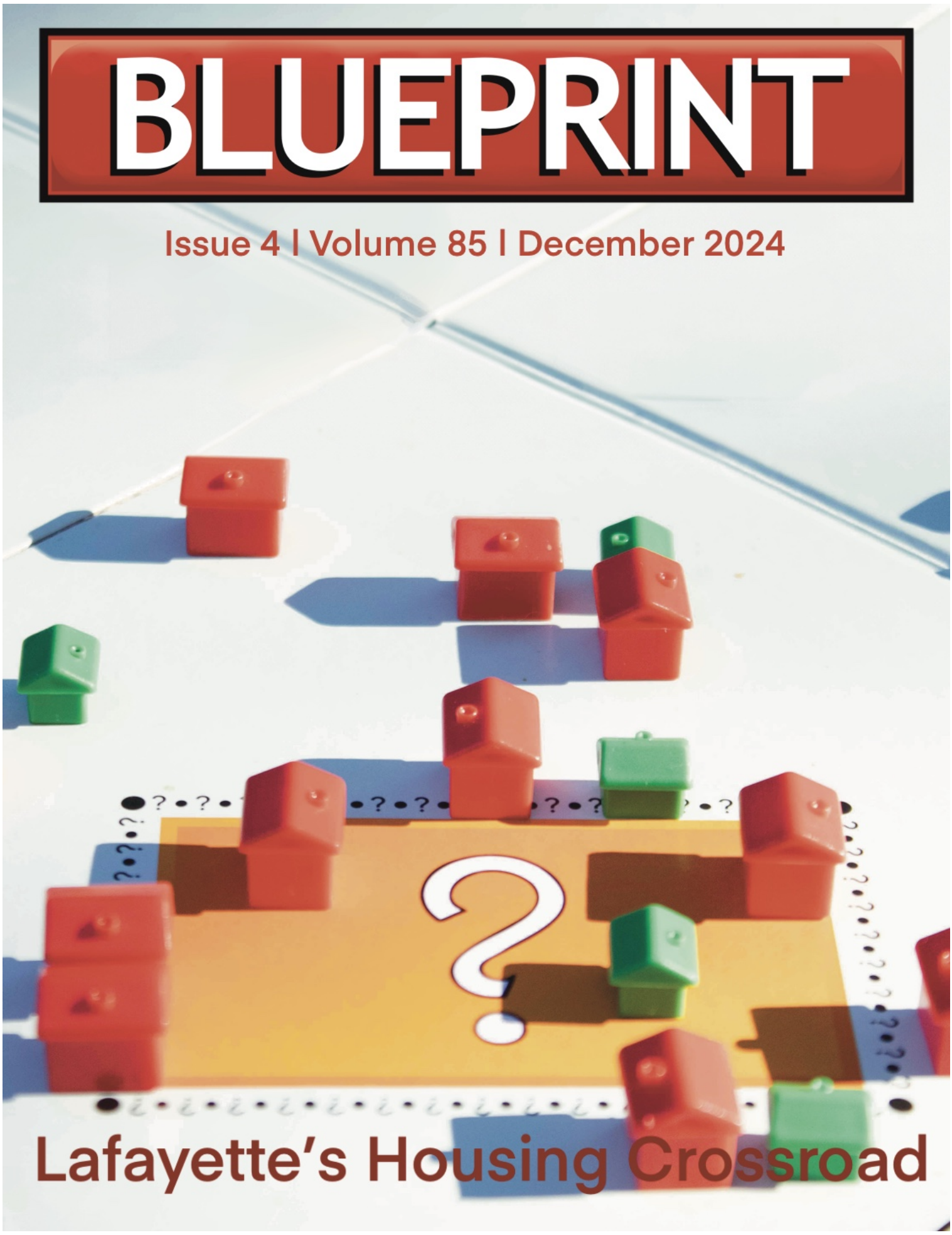

Lafayette's Housing Crossroad

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Behind the scenes of cover's art

As the Graphics Team, it is our goal to capture the ideas of *Blueprint* articles effectively through portraying the pieces visually. The cover of this issue went through many different phases. When hearing about the development of The Terraces of Lafayette, we knew we wanted to toy with imagining the completed project itself. For a while, we were stumped. We initially considered doing a graphic, overlaying the blueprints of the project with a photo of the site. After experimenting with this concept, we were unhappy with the results and knew we had to pivot. Leaning into a more abstract representation of the project, we came up with the idea to use the plastic housing pieces from the board game Monopoly as a makeshift model of the apartments.

Bending the rules of piece placement, the red and green houses are scattered along the middle of the board, centered around the "chance card" marker. These houses stand for the project itself. The orange question mark represents the mixed feelings and concerns surrounding the development of the apartment complex.

To see more selected photos from our cover photo shoot turn to page 18.

Bo Chevaleau, Cade McAlister & Audrey Martin, Head of Graphics & Heads of Photography

Letter from the Editors

Dear *Blueprint* Reader,

We are so excited to share *Blueprint's* fourth issue of Volume 85. In this issue, *Blueprint* covers a range of student initiatives and local events, from Dons embracing community service programs and charities across the Bay Area to Lafayette's first Plaid Friday.

In our cover story, *Blueprint* examines O'Brien Land Company's Terraces of Lafayette Project, the largest construction development in Lafayette's history. *Blueprint* explores the project's complicated developmental stage– marked by resistance from Lafayette residents, pro-affordable housing groups, and historic preservationist organizations, delaying the city's approval by 12 years–, its projected direct and domino impact, and the community's diverse attitudes toward its development. To understand this complex project that inspired both resistance in the California Supreme Court and excitement for its potential, localized alleviation of the state's ongoing housing crisis, *Blueprint* spoke to active members in the project as well as Lafayette and Bay Area council members, including Terraces of Lafayette Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Caryn Kali, Lafayette City Councilman Carl Anduri, Senior Vice President of Policy at the Bay Area Council Matt Regan, and Inclusive Lafayette Director and Policy Manager for the Housing Leadership Council of San Mateo County Jeremy Levine.

As always, to submit a response to any story within our paper, scan the QR code to submit a letter to the editor through *Blueprint* Online. Please refer to the bottom of the Table of Contents for *Blueprint's* mission statement. We hope you enjoy this issue of *Blueprint* and look forward to sharing more stories in the future.

Maya Agarwal & Avery Robb, Print Editors-in-Chief

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Blueprint strives to uplift voices in our community with truth and transparency.

A Thankful Start to the Holiday Season

The Lafayette Chamber hosts the annual community Thanksgiving Breakfast

Mila Ellis and Maddie Obertello | Staff Writers

Photo by Maddie Obertello

A cheerful spirit fills the air as Lafayette community members take their seats at the community Thanksgiving Breakfast to kick off the holidays.

The Lafayette Chamber of Commerce hosted its 45th annual Thanksgiving Breakfast event on Nov. 21, aiming to bring Lafayette closer together. Attendees also listened to multiple guest speakers during the event.

The Lafayette Chambers first organized the tradition to bring together Lafayette residents, especially during the holiday season.

"It is a quick but informative, feel-good, community event where we bring a lot of people together and it makes a difference," Lafayette Chamber of Commerce Communications Director Holly Sonne said.

To kick off the event, Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church Pastor Peter Whitelock took the stage and gave an invocation. Whitelock united attendees in a prayer to commence this year's breakfast.

"As much as possible, I tried to [start the invocation] in an ecumenical and interfaith way, recognizing that there were people present from a whole variety of religious traditions, and some who embrace no particular tradition at all," Pastor Whitelock said.

Gaby Ghorbani, founder of the nonprofit Pledge to Humanity, also gave a speech at the event. Her message aligned with that of Pledge to Humanity, an organization which empowers people to volunteer and help the quality of life of others, which took off in recent years.

"Pledge to Humanity was born out of the desire to make the world a better place by having ... anyone who wants to volunteer just be aware of what we can do as society members to help others in different ways. Bringing opportunities to kids and to adults is one dream I've had since I was a very young child, " Ghorbani said.

Ready to continue her initiatives forward, Ghorbani believes winning California Nonprofit of the Year in 2023 put Pledge to Humanity on the map and was a step in the right direction. When speaking at this event Ghorbani hoped to strengthen her visibility, a key step in expanding the reach of her efforts to help underserved communities.

"I want to bring awareness ... because what we do right now is great but what I want to do in the future is grow and bring more opportunities more kids, be able to grow where there are multiple schools and clubs, kids, groups and businesses that want to participate in Pledge to Humanity and everything we do," Ghorbani said.

A consistent message throughout the breakfast, including in Ghorbani's speech, touched on the importance of engaging youth to improve communities. The event gave adults the opportunity to exchange this idea while also recognizing Pledge to Humanity's mission, the power of the youth, emphasizing their role in making change.

"I just love the fact that we are able to enlighten the youth of today about what they are able to do and what they are able to give back to their communities and make sure that people know that kids can make a difference," Board President of Pledge to Humanity Carrie Barlow said.

For many attendees, uplifting the voices of future generations was a key takeaway from the breakfast.

"I think it's important just to remind people, especially those who are new to Lafayette, that we are a community that really thrives on volunteerism. Getting our kids connected with that message early on is important," Lafayette Chamber Board of Directors President Katie Santos said.

Some also considered the breakfast as an opportunity for community bonding. The event sought to inspire collaboration among attendees and speakers alike.

"It's wonderful to see people with differing viewpoints and perspectives come together in seeking ways to make Lafayette a better place to live and raise families. I also appreciated that the breakfast was focused on gratitude as we enter into the Thanksgiving holiday," Pastor Whitelock said.

The Chamber of Commerce breakfast will continue to be an event in the future, seeking to keep the Lafayette community bonded in years to come.

"We need these events and organizations like the Chamber of Commerce, to help us remain connected and committed to the common good. Great communities don't just happen, they are built up by people who care," Pastor Whitelock said.

A Change in Pattern: Lafayette Plaid Friday

Lafayette Chamber of Commerce holds retail event to support local businesses

Aamena Shipchandler, Emily Roberts, and Tselmeg Orgilmunkh | Print News Editor, Print Feature Editor, and Staff Writer

Blueprint Photo/Emily Roberts

On Black Friday, many people picture big-box stores filled with rows of mass-produced products to welcome in the holiday season. However, the Lafayette community welcomes a new pattern this year as Plaid Friday turns excitement for the holidays into support for small businesses. Storefronts along Mount Diablo Boulevard took part in "Plaid Friday" and helped kick off the holiday season.

Lafayette hosted its first-ever Plaid Friday event on Nov. 29, encouraging citizens to wear plaid while shopping locally as an alternative to retail store sales held during Black Friday. 20 local businesses participated, and some employees dressed in plaid to celebrate.

Plaid Friday began in 2009 when Kerri Johnson, owner of Marion and Rose's Workshop in Oakland, Calif., wanted to promote small businesses in Oakland during the busy holiday season. The American Independent Business Alliance adopted this initiative, making it a nationally celebrated event each year.

The Lafayette Chamber of Commerce and its new Retail Committee helped the adoption of Plaid Friday this year. Local business owners organized the Retail Committee after Wendy Tamis had the idea in April to increase communication and support between business owners.

"I had the idea to start [the Retail Committee] because I've been in business for 48 years and I've been on the Lafayette Board of Directors for a long time. I thought it was time to have meetings between retail stores as well," Clocks Etc. owner Wendy Tamis said.

During its creation, the Retail Committee strived to gain insight from a variety of business owners to incorporate different perspectives.

"I felt like [the committee] really needed an assortment of people … I've been in the community for 30 years, and I've had a store for 12, so I felt like it was a big deal for me to be a part of it. I love our meetings [and] I love getting together. I love hearing people's feedback, what's working in their stores, what's working in our store," White Barn Home owner Kim Berry said.

Since the founding of the committee, Lafayette retail stores collaborated to host three events aiming to highlight local businesses, Plaid Friday being the third.

"Plaid Friday is the third event that the Retail Committee has put on. The first was the Lafayette Artisan Walk, where businesses paired up with one or more local artists to sell goods. A few weeks ago we had a Mocktail stroll and shop, [where] business owners could show creativity and create a fun drink along with their store," Lafayette Chamber of Commerce Communications Director Holly Sonne said.

In planning Plaid Friday, owners wanted a unique angle. They created new, fun patterns on products to commemorate the event, incentivizing customers to wear plaid to further spirit for the event.

"The committee was really discussing using creativity for plaid, the retailers are going to sell bows that are plaid, or sell wrapping papers that have plaid, and get community members to wear plaid, just to show that they are choosing to shop locally," Sonne said.

Prior to the event, many store owners who participated in Plaid Friday hoped the event would increase the number of shoppers and stimulate the local economy.

"I [thought] Plaid Friday [would] invigorate the local small business economy and provide a much-needed cash influx to the business owners. That money goes back into the community, so it's a big win all around," Ware Designs owner Melissa Watson said.

Other Lafayette store owners believed that Plaid Friday could help community members embrace the start of the holidays in a different way.

"I am hoping that Plaid Friday will be a reminder to our friends in Lafayette that supporting their local businesses is a great way to support their communities, in addition to being a great way to kick off their holiday shopping season," Reasonable Books owner Rudy Winnacker said.

Participating in Plaid Friday and supporting local businesses may also establish bonds between business owners and local community citizens. Former mayor of Oakland Libby Schaaf, too, showed her support to Harper Greeres during a previous Plaid Friday event in Oakland.

"Libby Schaaf … came waltzing down the street in a white and black plaid pantsuit. She came into our store and said, 'I'm here to shop and support you.' So, we had a hug, and … [she] got some [gifts] for her mom," Kiskaddon said.

Despite the Retail Committee's organizing efforts, Plaid Friday's customer turnout was low, and many Lafayette community members were unaware of the event.

"We did not have a good turnout. We had one customer. She and her daughter came in with plaid pants on, so I was excited. I ended up giving them a free little holiday ornament for dressing up because they were so cute," Berry said.

Some store owners hope to continue the event in future years with changes to incite community participation.

"I felt like we should have had more of a theme. If we had a theme, it could still be Plaid Friday, but it should also have either discounts associated with it, a drawing, or a way to really get them in the door," Berry said.

Blueprint Photo/Tselmeg Orgilmunkh

Lafayette hopes to continue highlighting local businesses during and after the holiday season through events like Plaid Friday.

"I think this event is a great way to showcase local businesses. Downtown Lafayette has a lot to offer. This event will demonstrate that it's not only big-box retailers who have great deals and quality products. Supporting small businesses is a great way to love Lafayette," Watson said.

Feast of Friendship

Seniors celebrate annual Friendsgiving event

Audrey Tugade and Trevor Krick | Staff Writers

Photos by Audrey Tugade

Students filled the Chris Huber Memorial Gym as food and friendship brought seniors together.

The Acalanes senior class officers hosted the school's annual Friendsgiving lunch event on Nov. 20 in the Chris Huber Memorial Gym. The grade, with help from the school's leadership program and parent volunteers, organized the Thanksgiving-themed potluck to foster an inclusive and collaborative environment.

"For [senior Friendsgiving] we want to make it a place where everyone in our grade can come together and be in the same space [and] feel thankful for one another and to be grateful for the friendships we have made," Senior Class President Jane Schrader said.

Organizers also hope the event promotes class bonding during the season of giving.

"I think that because it's around the time of Thanksgiving, it makes us more grateful for each other. It's a special event that really makes you appreciate the people around you more and truly feel thankful for them," Acalanes Student Body Public Relations Officer and senior Heloísa Mateus said.

Many students felt Friendsgiving was a fun experience for seniors at lunch.

"We're all eating together and socializing, so it's just a great way to connect with all the other students," senior Carsten Ristow said.

A fall-themed Friendsgiving banner greets studets as they walk through the food line.

Hungry seniors line up to receive food and join their peers in bonding activities.

Parent volunteers serve pie with whipped cream to students.

Seniors Maelin Mason and Ducli Vail play Spikeball.

Seniors sit on the bleachers of the Chris Huber Memorial Gym in the company of their classmates eating turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing, salad, and apple pie.

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News Briefs

Senior Dodgeball

Maddie Obertello | Staff Writer

Students gathered at the annual Senior Dodgeball event from Dec. 2 through Dec. 9, cheering on senior athletes in the big gym as they showcased their team spirit in a week of friendly competition.

Leadership announced the ten different student-led teams on Nov. 18. Each received a color, team captain, and teacher. As the games started, different teams played each day in a double-elimination bracket as the competition progressed towards a winner. Many students found this event a great way to connect with their classmates and build camaraderie outside the classroom.

"Senior Dodgeball has been so fun for not only the seniors on the court, but everyone coming to support the players and teachers. The tournament has promoted such fun and friendly competition between different teams and has been a great event overall," Senior Class Vice President Reiney Fish said.

Teams White and Purple competed on Monday, Dec. 9, for the championship, with the purple team coming out on top as the final winner.

It's a Wonderful Life in Lafayette

Mila Ellis | Staff Writer

In a festive kickoff to the holiday season, the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce hosted the annual It's a Wonderful Life in Lafayette celebration. On Dec. 8, the event included the official tree-lighting ceremony, holiday treats, live music, and entertainment.

Attendees supported the community with live productions from Stanley Middle School and Acalanes High School choir, along with local performing arts businesses and the Lafayette Nursery School.

This year, locals also engaged in holiday activities such as meeting Santa for a photo and making gratitude cards. Community members enjoyed food and drinks from local vendors and Round Table Pizza.

The holiday tradition helped the Lafayette community kick-off and celebrate the winter season.

Go to Blueprint *online to read a full story covering the It's a Wonderful Life in Lafayette event.*

DEIB Debrief

Zinnia Khan | DEIB Director

The International Day of Persons with Disabilities:

People across the globe recognize the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) on Dec. 3 each year. The United Nations created IDPD in 1992, aiming to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in society.

Each year, IDPD focuses on a specific theme to raise awareness, challenge stigmas, and encourage action towards creating a more inclusive world for individuals with disabilities. The day offers an opportunity to advocate for policy changes, accessibility improvements, and greater social participation.

The theme for 2024 is "amplifying the leadership of persons with disabilities for an inclusive and sustainable future." According to the United Nations, this theme aims to recognize the important role that persons with disabilities play in creating a more inclusive and sustainable world for all, as well as the participation of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes that affect their lives.

One inclusive effort for students with disabilities at Acalanes is Unified Sports, where students in general education and essential skills programs collaborate on a sports team throughout the year. The experience can be especially educational for general education students, who are often separated from their essential skills peers.

"Many times general education students who don't regularly interact with our [essential skills] students are shocked to see just how skilled and athletic the athletes are, [and] people truly just need to keep an open mind. We often put people who we don't know into a box that is not very often an accurate representation of who they are," Unified Sports partner and senior Elena Russo said.

HIV/AIDS Awareness Month:

People around the world celebrate HIV and AIDS Awareness Month during December in an effort to raise awareness about Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS), and to recognize those who the infection and disease have affected. The month aims to educate the public on prevention, testing, and treatment options, while also addressing the stigma and discrimination that often surround HIV and AIDS.

The month also serves as an opportunity to highlight the importance of sex education, early diagnosis, the effectiveness of antiretroviral therapy, and ongoing efforts to find a cure. Through education, advocacy, and community support, HIV and AIDS Awareness Month encourages solidarity and promotes healthier and more informed communities.

Per the California Healthy Youth Act of 2016, schools are required to provide seventh graders through high school seniors comprehensive sex education. At Acalanes, students learn about topics related to HIV and AIDS in their Human Social Development (HSD) classes.

"I think it's really good to have a period of time each year where we acknowledge the impact that HIV has had in the United States and around the world, and that it's still having, even though it might not always be first in the news," HSD and Spanish teacher Monika Voellm said.

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From Classroom to Community

Acalanes students' contributions to the Bay Area

Tselmeg Orgilmunkh, Natalie Pecci, Cypress Reid, and Audrey Tugade | Staff Writers

Photos by Emily Roberts and Audrey Tugade

A buzz fills the air as students chat back and forth comparing holiday gift lists. Each is longer than the last with all sorts of items. A teacher looks over their shoulders, expecting to find these students making lists for themselves. Instead, the season of giving brings surprises, as these students make lists for people they have never even met.

Acalanes students dedicate their time outside of the classroom to impacting the world around them during the holiday season by participating in community service programs and charities such as Adopt-a-Family, GLIDE Memorial Church, Hope Solutions, and Pledge to Humanity to help those in need.

Adopt-a-Family

Adopt-a-Family is an annual holiday charity program that pairs an individual or group with a family in need to purchase holiday gifts and necessities. Adopt-a-Family supports families that are experiencing hardships including homelessness, unemployment, medical issues, and natural disasters.

"We have families referred to us from local school districts, school navigators, [and] family navigators. We have low-income housing programs that [also] refer families to us. We work with drug and alcohol recovery facilities, CPS agents, and foster agencies. We now have a wide spectrum of families that come to us," Adopt-a-Family Northern California Founder and CEO Cydnee Reed said.

At Acalanes, many teachers "Adopt-a-Family" with their classes. Teachers actively encourage student participation by emphasizing the importance of expressing empathy for others and the impact students can have in their community.

"In my fifth-period class, we talked about how great it is to be able to shop for a family in our community and to be able to help them. I think Acalanes is doing well with encouraging students to participate in Adopt-A-Family because we care a lot about the well-being of others and ourselves," sophomore Daphne Dale said.

Students and families contribute to the cause by donating money and gifts, as well as volunteering to shop for and wrap presents.

"Many students in my class brought money to donate or wanted to help with the shopping and wrapping part of the program. It felt good to know that we were making a positive difference in the lives of a local family," Dale said.

Adopted families provide lists of wants and needs as well as clothing sizes to give guidance to those purchasing the gifts.

"Usually the families fill out a profile and sometimes it's toys or fun gifts for the kids. Oftentimes it's clothes or things for the home like towels or cooking utensils," Drama teacher Ed Meehan said.

Students play a key role in helping charity organizations assist those who are less fortunate. Adopt-a-Family receives its resources and materials from donors. Students and school involvement allows for the company to give back to the community, kids, and families.

"We have a hopeful system. This is a business, [but] this is not a money-making business. It's a business that's a labor of love. We do the connection. We need people [to] give, go shopping, and buy gifts ... for the kids," Reed said. "No matter how they go about it. We try to work with whatever [people can give]."

GLIDE Memorial Church

GLIDE Memorial Church collaborated with Leadership's Community Outreach Board to organize volunteering opportunities that help underprivileged communities in San Francisco. Acalanes students volunteered by preparing and providing food on Sept. 29. and Dec. 7.

"The goal of GLIDE is to provide food and shelter to homeless and low-income families in San Francisco [and] break the poverty cycle," Community Outreach member and sophomore Hetty Lofting said.

The Community Outreach board partnered with GLIDE Memorial to create more volunteer opportunities for students to get involved in the community.

"We aim to get our peers involved in

volunteering and to also spread awareness about those who are disadvantaged in our broader community. it's a great way to connect Acalanes students with a service opportunity [and] become more involved in service," Community Outreach member and sophomore Angela Lin said.

Many believe that participating in GLIDE can be an enlightening experience as it exposes students to different perspectives and teaches them the importance of compassion and volunteering.

"It's a really good experience for students to be able to step out of the Lamorinda bubble and it's cool to be able to go to San Francisco which is so close, and there's a drastically different economic diversity there. It's a good experience to see how others are less privileged than you" Community Outreach Board Head and junior Lauren Foster said.

Overall, volunteering for GLIDE Memorial aims to support underprivileged individuals in San Francisco while offering meaningful experiences for the volunteers that highlight the importance of community service.

"My favorite memory is [seeing] the joy on people's faces. The experience reminded me of how a small act of [serving] food really can brighten someone's day," Lofting said.

Contributing Photo/Hetty Lofting

Hope Solutions Book Drive

The Hope Solutions Book Drive is a project by the National Charity League (NCL), a non-profit organization with chapters all around the country. NCL encourages mothers and daughters in middle school through high school to work with different charities and participate in community service. The Hope Solutions Book drive is part of the NCL's "Sweet Dreams" senior class project.

"[For] Sweet Dreams [we read] to low-income [and] homeless kids ... we make book bags and gift the books to them," NCL member and senior Lucy Thomas said.

The "Sweet Dreams" project partnered with Hope Solutions to give back to kids and families in need within Contra Costa County.

"Hope Solutions helps with project housing and permanent living situations for kids. So, with the book drive, we're just collecting books and we're going to donate them," Thomas said.

Students from various Lamorinda high schools ran the book drive from Nov. 5 through Nov. 22. They gathered a diverse selection for children ranging from toddlers to early high school.

"[We also work with Campolindo] and Miramonte. It's been super great [at Acalanes]. We've gotten a lot of books so it's been awesome," Thomas said.

Many people feel that hosting events like the Book drive is important because it helps create a safe and healthy community and encourages students to reflect about their situations.

"I think it's good to think about other students. Your fellow students could be in different situations than you. So if lucky [and] if you're fortunate, you should give back," Thomas said.

Pledge to Humanity

Pledge to Humanity is a volunteer organization made up of clubs throughout Bay Area high schools. This year, Acalanes students started a Pledge to Humanity club to create more community service opportunities for students.

"I appreciate [that] Pledge to Humanity is making an impact but [is] also building it into the school day so that students who might not be able to serve outside of the school day have opportunities to do it," Activities Director Katherine Walton said.

The club hosted their first event on Nov. 13 at academy. Students put together toiletry bags for a homeless shelter in Concord and also crafted bracelets for a shelter in Mexico.

"Our goal was to create as many kits

as possible, but to also spread awareness through how many people showed up, and spreading awareness of all the kids in need," Pledge to Humanity Club Vice President and sophomore Evelyn Lee said.

Some students wanted to help to show their support for those in their community who may be less fortunate than them.

"I wanted to be a part of it because for me, I haven't really experienced many struggles and I thought that looking at those that do, that I could be a part of helping it and fixing and being part of the change," Lee said.

Blanket Making

The Community Outreach Board organized a volunteer event on Dec. 4 during academy where students made "no-sew-blankets."

"The blankets will be donated to the Food Pantry & Distribution Center and given to individuals and families in need this winter, particularly those who may not have the means to afford essentials like blankets and coats," Community Outreach member and sophomore Anna Motes said.

The Blanket Making event aids in bonding Acalanes together to attempt to make a meaningful impact in others' lives.

"The goals for this event [were] to encourage students from all backgrounds and levels of volunteering experience to come together and raise awareness about those in need, both locally and globally," Motes said.

Some believe that volunteering embodies the spirit of giving associated with the holidays, encouraging students to reflect on their own circumstances.

"Community service events like this also help students develop compassion and empathy by allowing them to experience firsthand the importance of giving and being grateful for what they have. It encourages a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by others and the power of kindness," Motes said.

Overall, teachers emphasize the importance of students' involvement in community service. It could foster a stronger sense of community, potentially offering students different perspectives in the real world.

"I think as a school we have an obligation to respond and provide resources and opportunities for students to pursue what they're passionate about because ... doing service exposes you to skills that you might not know you had that might be an avenue you want to pursue in the future. I think it is producing young people who are more equipped to go out into the real world, which I think is great," Walton said.

Gallacher's Gist: Economics Everywhere

Exploring the economic implications of the 2024 presidential election

Molly Connelly and Grace Gallacher | Print Feature Editor and Opinion Copy Editor

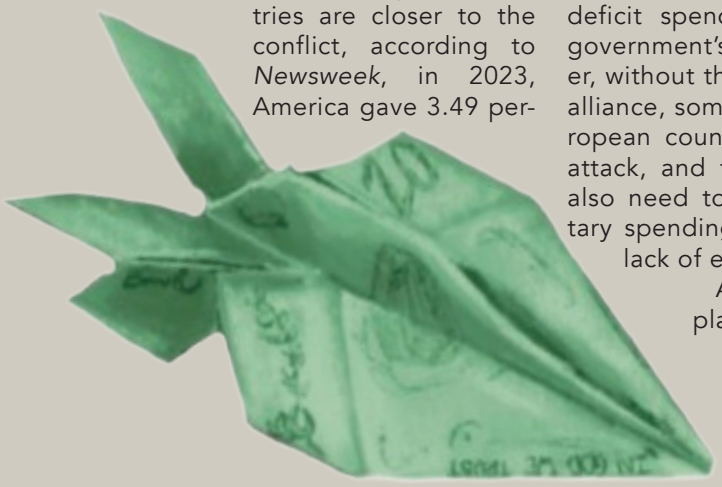
Spread by Bo Chevaleau

In the wake of the results of the presidential election on November 5, 2024, the stock market jumped 1500 points by the next morning. Such a drastic impact leads many to wonder how President-Elect Donald Trump's policies will influence the economy.

According to the *Pew Research Center*, throughout the presidential campaigns of 2024, approximately 81 percent of voters ranked the economy as their most prioritized issue. Politicians have economic plans that they claim will bolster the state of business, while most of their other plans silently yet severely impact the economy as well, particularly around foreign policy, immigration, and natural disaster aid.

While not highly advertised, Trump seeks to limit the amount of money America contributes to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which consists of 32 countries, most of which are from Europe. Currently, most NATO funds provide aid to Ukraine during its ongoing conflict with Russia.

Yet, even though European countries are closer to the conflict, according to *Newsweek*, in 2023, America gave 3.49 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP) to NATO, which translated to about 967 billion dollars and 68 percent of NATO's overall funds. In contrast, the next three top contributors, adjusted to dollars, are Germany at 97.7 billion, the United Kingdom (UK) at 82.1 billion, and France at 64.3 billion. In terms of their GDP, Germany contributes 2.19 percent, UK contributes 2.46 percent, and France contributes 2.12 percent.



Due to this discrepancy, Trump claims that he will not further contribute to NATO until the other 31 members contribute their fair share, as he is unwilling to let foreign bodies take advantage of the American people. Trump also says that he is willing to break the alliance if he feels it is necessary.

If he were to terminate America's place in NATO, the United States government would have a larger budget, as there would be no need to allocate nearly a trillion dollars to the alliance. In doing so, Trump could reduce his deficit spending and ultimately the government's budget deficit. However, without the protection of a military alliance, some argue that it leaves European countries more vulnerable to attack, and the United States would also need to increase domestic military spending to compensate for the lack of external security.

As for immigration, Trump plans to enact the largest deportation plan in history, deporting about 12 million undocumented immigrants in America. However, to succeed, the country would have to, on average, deport 8,213.6 undocumented immigrants per day, requiring not only a boost in funding, but new and larger facilities, and more workers - which will cost millions of dollars.

Yet, that is not where the economic implications end. Since undocumented migrants fill millions of jobs in America, industries would have to find replacements and provide adequate working conditions and pay. Employers exploit undocumented immigrants by underpaying them, so while Trumps' policy would increase the number of employed Americans, industry would slow overall, especially agriculture and manufacturing, due to higher expenses.

However, assuming businesses fill the emptied roles, employing American citizens also means that the government would collect more in tax dollars. Since the laborers get paid more and are all accounted for, it translates to a higher percentage of dollars collected per person, as well as the actual number of people the government collects taxes from. Although this would increase the federal budget, it would not meet the amount that the government would have to spend, ultimately leading to an increase of debt.

Furthermore, the increase in wages would exacerbate inflation. Coupled with the industrial decline, the country would likely face a phenomenon known as stagflation, the economic experience of slow growth with high prices. Due to the fact that a stagnant economy and inflation typically occur in opposite situations, according to Investopedia, there is not a certain solution, rather a consensus among economists that productivity must rise to a point where it will increase growth

without additional inflation.

As for California, Trump has made remarks in the past about restricting federal aid for Californians due to his disdain for many of the state's more liberal policies. Throughout his campaign, he criticized the rising cost of living in California, immigrant communities, and high homelessness rates. However, many of the changes he proposed throughout his presidential campaign fall outside the scope of executive power.

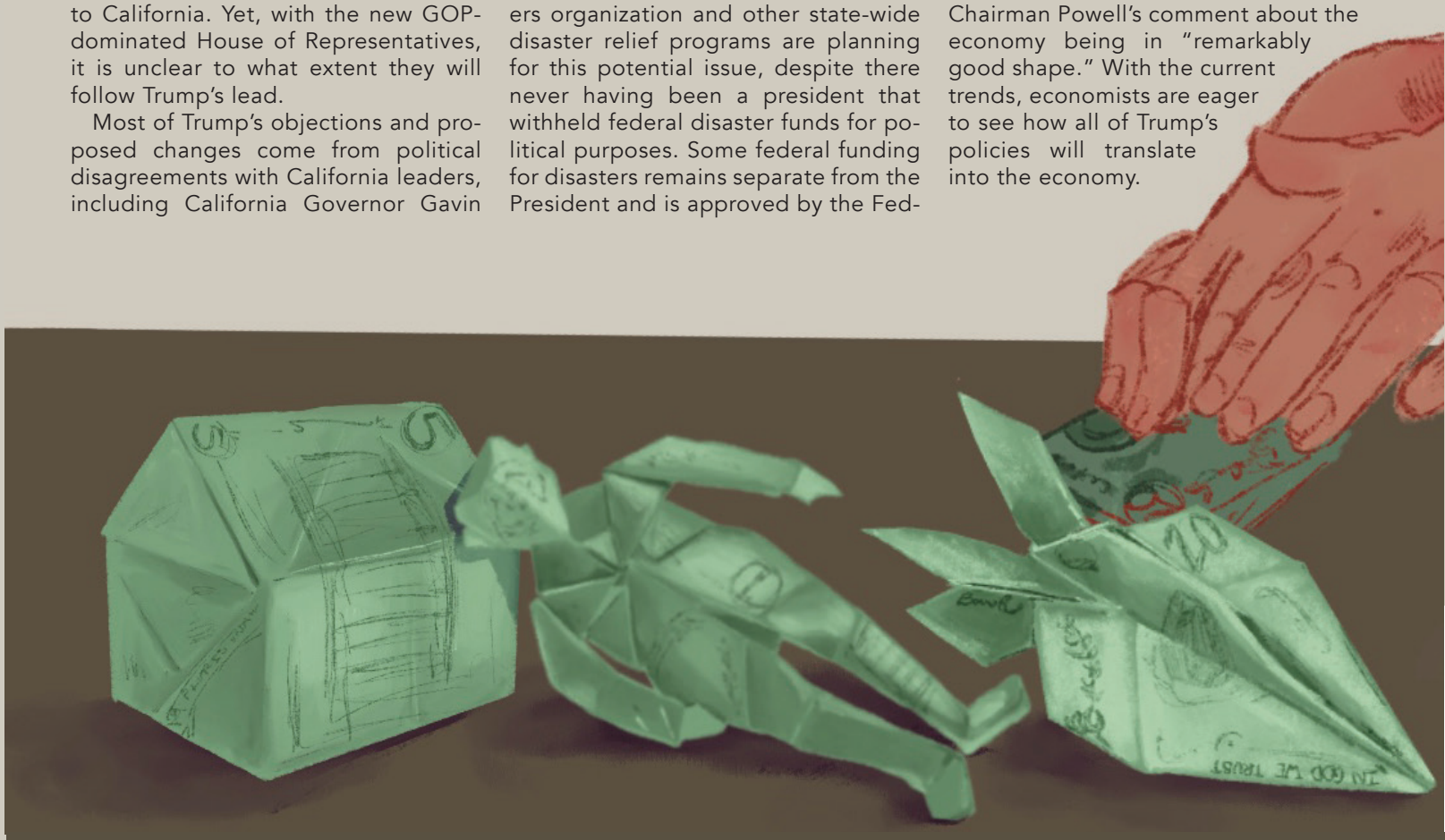
The legislative branch will hold far more authority in terms of changes to California. Yet, with the new GOP-dominated House of Representatives, it is unclear to what extent they will follow Trump's lead.

Most of Trump's objections and proposed changes come from political disagreements with California leaders, including California Governor Gavin Newsom. Immediately following the election, Newsom stated that California needed to "Trump-proof," meaning he sought to gain protection for existing California policies while still under a democratic president.

Throughout his campaign, Trump often addressed California wildfires, continuing from his presidency where, in 2018, he threatened to withhold funding for wildfire victims, claiming that they were "democrats who did not vote for [him]." However, he eventually approved this funding.

The California Professional Firefighters organization and other state-wide disaster relief programs are planning for this potential issue, despite there never having been a president that withheld federal disaster funds for political purposes. Some federal funding for disasters remains separate from the President and is approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, meaning some funding would still be available separate from presidential power.

Although most of Trump's non-economic policies will likely harm the United States economy, the stock market likely rallied due to his plans for major tax cuts on large corporations, which would enable high corporate profits and reinvestment into the economy. Now, after President Biden's four years in office, the Dow Jones Industrial Average reached a new record high on Dec. 4, influenced by Federal Reserve Chairman Powell's comment about the economy being in "remarkably good shape." With the current trends, economists are eager to see how all of Trump's policies will translate into the economy.



Dear readers,

Writing Gallacher's Gist gave me something to look forward to and served as a creative outlet throughout my junior and senior year, and it has been my pleasure to write for you and Blueprint. *With that said, I am stepping away in order to ensure a smooth transition of authors. Since I will graduate in the spring, I am passing Gallacher's Gist to our Print Feature Editor, Molly Connelly.*

Through this page, I had the privilege of educating my community on the relevance of politics and how it has expanded to touch on all aspects of the Acalanes community. I thank all of you for your attention to my work, for without you, there would be no impact to be made. Thank you for all of your time, trust, and unwavering support. I hope you enjoyed one last Gallacher's Gist.

With all of my gratitude,
Grace Gallacher

Local Government Briefs

Sameed Marco and Saaj Shah | Online Content Manager and Online Editor

City Council

The Lafayette City Council held one of its bimonthly meetings on Nov. 15. The public can access the meeting's minutes, agenda, and audio on the City of Lafayette website, and the Council posts a livestream of the meeting on the City of Lafayette's Youtube channel. Community members can also virtually join the meeting on Zoom through the city website. For the meeting, the council opened with a closed session followed by public comments.

The meeting opened with a Pledge of Allegiance led by Boy Scout Troop 219. The meeting then transitioned into public comments. Lafayette citizen Elizabeth Henry emphasized the importance of indigenous relations citing their claim to the cities land and emphasizing the need to amplify native voices.

City Manager Niroop Srivasta gave an update introducing newly appointed Senior Planner Stefanie Cervantes who will work on city planning and the development of city projects.

The council also held a public hearing on the Tree Protection Ordinance. The council acknowledged the need for more clear regulations about protected and excluded trees and the ordinance's impact on wildfire safety. They stated that there was a need for better communication about the ordinance.

Governing Board

The Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD) Governing Board held meetings on Nov. 6 and Nov. 20, inviting student representatives from all five schools to provide updates on recent site events and activities, followed by Governing Board members who spoke about recent district updates and changes. The public can attend the meeting in person or through a live broadcast on the AUHSD website.

The board examined and authorized the 2024-2025 Community Services Agreement between the City of Walnut Creek and the Acalanes Union High School District, which includes matching funding for crisis counseling services at Las Lomas High School. This agreement ensures that the two parties will continue collaborating throughout the year.

Next, the board reviewed and approved the staff's recommendation to reorganize Classified Management by eliminating the Director of Custodial Services, Aquatics, and Facility Use, and introducing two new coordinator positions to better support district operations. The new positions include Coordinator of Custodial Services & Facility Use Program and Coordinator of Aquatics.

AUHSD staff noted that in October 2024, enrollment increased by nine students, with estimates indicating a reduction over the next three years and a minor increase in four years, all which is subject to change. There will be an update published in April 2025.

During the meeting, the board reviewed a proposal similar to the payment for represented employees. The proposal includes a one percent one-time payment for active and current non-represented employee groups, including Certificated Management, Classified Management, and Confidential Staff in good standing. It is based on the current salary schedule for all eligible employees as of Nov. 6, 2024.

During the meeting on Nov. 20, the governing board discussed that despite significant local support, the AUHSD is facing a financing crisis due to insufficient state allocation under the Local California Funding Formula (LCFF), resulting in unsustainable usage of financial reserves. The Board will analyze the multiyear budget and consider spending cuts and revenue increases for the 2025-2026 school year.

The AUHSD Governing Board approved a contract with True North to conduct a parcel tax survey, aiming to explore the feasibility of enhancing district revenue through an additional parcel tax. This initiative seeks to address the persistent structural deficit and declining purchasing power of the existing tax revenue.

The Governing Board reviewed Board Policy 5117 (Interdistrict Attendance), which outlines the criteria for approving student transfers into the district from other school districts. This policy allows limited transfers based on space availability, fiscal considerations, and specific priorities, such as parents employed by AUHSD or partner districts, siblings of current AUHSD students, and students who attended 8th grade in partner districts. The superintendent retains the authority to deny transfer requests due to overcrowding or resource limitations. After review, staff recommended no changes to the policy, keeping the current structure and priorities intact.

B.

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Lafayette's Housing Crossroads

A look into the Terraces of Lafayette project

Haley Chelemedos, Saaj Shah, Mika Katznelson, and Gwyneth Lee | Print Managing Editor and Print Head of Layout, Online Editor, and Staff Writers

Spread by Bo Chevaleau, Audrey Martin, Cade McAlister and Emily Roberts | Head of Graphics, Heads of Photography, and Print Feature Editor

After more than a decade of legal work, over 120 public hearings, and significant community resistance, Lafayette residents are now beginning to see the early stages of the Terraces of Lafayette Project come to life. Set to be the largest development in Lafayette's history according to the *New York Times*, the Terraces of Lafayette project has become a focal point in the broader discussion about affordable housing in Lafayette and beyond.

The O'Brien land company first submitted the Terraces of Lafayette to the Lafayette City Council in 2011 and the city approved the plans for construction on March 15, 2023. O'Brien Homes, a Bay Area-based homebuilding company, is managing the multi-building development which is located at the intersection of Deer Hill Road, Pleasant Hill Road, and State Route (SR) 24, across from Acalanes High School. The development will consist of 315 apartments, 20 percent of which will be priced below market rate.

The Terraces of Lafayette concept has taken 12 years to pass. The lengthy approval process may be attributed to the project's prominent location on a highly visible site. Many local residents were actively involved in the project and resisted during the decision-making process, leading to a prolonged debate and stalemate.

"There were a lot of concerned citizens on both sides. I would say there were hundreds if not thousands of people who participated in some way or another, either by attending meetings or writing letters, or signing petitions. I think it's fair to say that a big percentage of the community was aware of or involved in this project one way or another," former Lafayette City Manager and lecturer at the University of California, Berkeley Goldman School of Public Policy Steven Falk said.

The Terraces of Lafayette was one of ten sites the city identified as a potential development project in the sixth and current cycle of the Lafayette Housing Element, a state-required document, outlining the community's housing needs and establishing goals for potential development. Part of the Housing Element is the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA), a state mandate that requires cities to plan for enough housing to accommodate all income levels based on the Area Median Income (AMI). The current RHNA for the 2023-2031 Lafayette Housing Element is 2,114 total units. Of those, 599 must be in the bottom 50 percent of the city's AMI. The Terraces of Lafayette will contain 63 of the 599 affordable units.

If a city does not meet its RHNA, it can face legal consequences from the state, including limited control over land use decisions. Going against the RHNA would prevent the city and La-

fayette citizens from influencing the project at all, a big factor in the approval of the Terraces of Lafayette.

"The city understands that state law would ... punish the city by potentially taking away state transportation dollars [or] punish the city by taking away discretionary approval over the site and potentially other sites as well," Senior Vice President of Policy at the Bay Area Council Matt Regan said. "If the city is declared not in compliance with its housing element, then the developer can use the state law known as the builder's remedy and build as dense a project, as tall a project as they want on the site."

Save Lafayette is a group that opposes the Terraces of Lafayette. They called for the city to either place a referendum, a direct vote by the people, regarding the ballot or rescind the ordinance that zoned the property. After years of fighting in the courts, the California Supreme Court denied their case, allowing for the Terraces Project to continue.

"The lawsuit brought against the developer and the city ended in 2023 when the California Supreme Court decided not to consider the appeal against the decision of the Court of Appeal in favor of the developer and the city," Lafayette City Councilman Carl Anduri said.

Throughout the years, other groups have sued O'Brien Lands over the project's logistics, prolonging the approval process. Most of these lawsuits debated whether to build housing units that would stick to the original 315 apartments or change to a different amount.

"After the developer filed an application for 315 units, the developer and the city agreed on an alternative proposal that called for 44 townhouses, a dog park, a playing field, and other amenities for the community. Save Lafayette opposed the compromise and [filed] a lawsuit [and] the 44 unit proposal was defeated. The developers then proceeded with the 315 unit application which was approved in August 2020," Anduri said. "The 44 unit proposal was also opposed by organizations that wanted to see more housing built on the Terraces property."

"After the developer filed an application for 315 units, the developer and the City agreed on an alternative proposal that called for 44 townhouses, a dog park, a playing field, and other amenities for the community. Save Lafayette opposed the compromise and [filed] a lawsuit [and] the 44 unit proposal was defeated. The developers then proceeded with the 315 unit application which was approved in August 2020," Anduri said.

The project faced crossroads as pro-affordable housing groups, in addition to house prevention groups like Save Lafayette, objected to the project's concession to Lafayette citizens. These critics filed a lawsuit for alleged failure to meet RHNA requirements for affordable housing units.

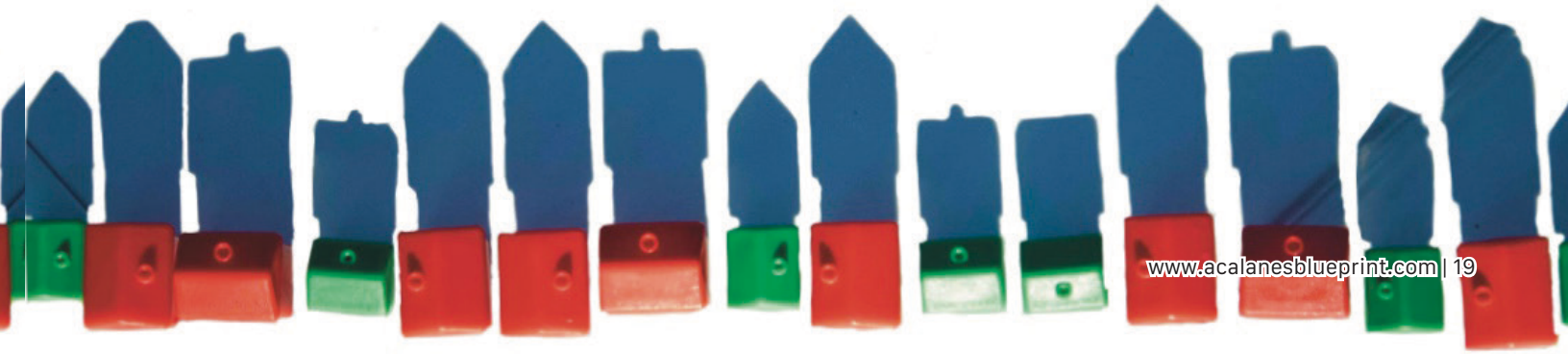
"[The Terraces of Lafayette] even got sued by the YIMBY's, [otherwise known as] the Yes In My Backyard group [who are] pro-housing people. They sued the city because they were mad that the city asked us to do 44 homes instead of 315 apartments because they were saying that's not being pro-housing," Terraces of Lafayette Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Caryn Kali said.

Overall, the Terraces of Lafayette, which would allow a more densely populated and affordable housing situation, has faced permitting difficulties because of how the city of Lafayette zones its land. Zoning policies divide densely populated areas from less densely populated areas, which may include separating areas that have factories and apartments from single-family homes.

"98 percent of Lafayette's residential land is zoned exclusively for single-family homes. You couldn't build an apartment there if you wanted. Which means that apartments, which tend to be denser and more affordable because they're a little smaller and you need less land per house, are treated the same as a factory," Inclusive Lafayette Director and Policy Manager for the Housing Leadership Council of San Mateo County Jeremy Levine said.

After settling or winning their lawsuits, the O'Brien company carried on with the project and prioritized getting funding and approval for it. For the affordable housing the company proposed, O'Brien considered two ways to go about funding.

"The way affordable housing gets built is through federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, LIHTC, or state and local sources. [This includes] bonds, other tax credits, grants, etc ... So these types of projects help build affordable housing that would likely never get built just because there's not enough money out there," Resilience Manager of the East Bay Greenbelt Alliance Victor Flores said.



The final decision to revert to the original plan of constructing 315 apartments has raised conversations about the impacts of traffic congestion and safety issues associated with the Terraces of Lafayette. Community members have expressed concern that students walking along Pleasant Hill Road could be at risk due to heavy traffic. Additionally, many commuters already use Pleasant Hill Road to bypass southbound I-680 or eastbound SR 4, which makes the intersection near the property particularly busy. The developers of the Terraces are working on road improvements to help ease the expected traffic impact.

"The traffic engineers ... actually show the traffic will be improved because we're going to do a trap lane [on Deer Hill]. We're going to add a lane along [Pleasant Hill Road] to go to the freeway. So cars that are getting onto the freeway can come over and come out, and so they won't be with the through traffic," Kali said.

With discussions about potential solutions to traffic, community members have expressed interest in improving public transportation.

"I try to ride my bike a couple times a week right now, so I don't drive too much. I kind of avoid the area ... [because] increased traffic is dangerous to bicycles and [motorists] ... [I] want to see improved transportation [and] public transportation. If there's a good public transit from here to [Bay Area Rapid Transit], that sounds like a great idea, getting less cars on the road," Living Earth and chemistry teacher Cooper Clark said.

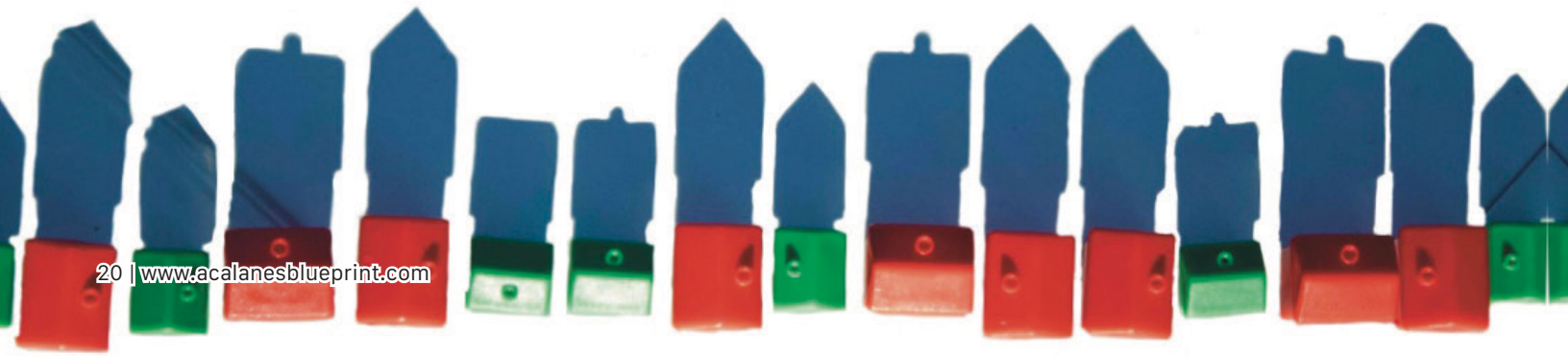
The nearest Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) station is about two miles from the Terraces of Lafayette site. To many people, the close proximity will allow future residents to use BART, a clean-energy transportation option, alleviating pressure from traffic.

"I am a fierce advocate for the building of housing near electrified transit systems because, one, we need more housing so as to reduce prices and alleviate homelessness and two, we need to reduce our carbon footprint in order to reduce the impacts of climate change. In my mind, the best way to do that is to build new places to live that are walking distance from electrified transit systems," Falk said.

In addition to reducing vehicle emissions, affordable housing helps the environment by generally having lower carbon emissions per unit of housing. Moreover, many believe that affordable housing keeps people in California, which is the third-most carbon-efficient state according to CalMatters. They claim that keeping more people in environmentally friendly states could benefit the overall environment.

"The traffic engineers ... actually show the traffic will be improved because we're going to do a trap lane [on Deer Hill]. We're going to add a lane along [Pleasant Hill Road] to go to the freeway. So cars that are getting onto the freeway can come over and come out, and so they won't be with the through traffic," Kali said.

Blueprint Photo/Hank Bauer



"If you believe that climate change is real and is a threat to our future, then building homes in California is the simplest and quickest way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We are the cleanest and greenest state in the union. Building homes for people here is fighting climate change. When people move to other states, their greenhouse gas and carbon footprints multiply by orders of magnitude," Regan said.

In addition to the environmental benefits, the Terraces' focal point is growing Lafayette's community. Due to the different income levels that the Terraces of Lafayette are appealing to, the project will likely bring new families into Lafayette.

"It will likely diversify the community because the people that live in those units will [probably] be in a different demographic than those who live in single-family homes which [are] predominant in Lafayette," Falk said.

In addition to adding to the Lafayette's diversity, some claim that the Terraces could help strengthen existing communities.

"For me, affordable housing could keep friends from moving away, helping our community stay connected. [It] would help families with lower incomes find stable places to live, reducing homelessness and housing stress. It would also let essential workers like teachers and healthcare staff live closer to work, saving them time and improving their quality of life. More affordable housing could mean people have extra money to spend locally, which helps boost small businesses. Overall, affordable housing would make Lafayette a more welcoming community for everyone," junior Tsimur Havarko said.

Many believe that increasing the housing supply, regardless of the type of housing, will improve the economy, help the environment, and provide social benefits.

"I think that building housing, affordable or not, is important in California. We have a housing crisis in California. There are simply not enough houses to go around and the result is that rent has gone up which makes California less affordable and therefore less competitive with other states, and also when there are not enough houses to go around. There is more homelessness, and it is indisputable that California has a homelessness problem. At large, adding housing to the city's housing stock will help address housing affordability and fight homelessness," Falk said.

The Terraces aim to address the lack of affordable housing in Lafayette, potentially alleviating California's broader and ongoing housing crisis.

"Lafayette has not grown in proportion to the demand for housing to live in a place like Lafayette. So the terrace is a very small drop in a very deep bucket that can help solve the problem of a devastating shortage of homes, a shortage of homes that is causing our homelessness crisis, that is pushing children out of cities like Lafayette," Levine said.

Local government members encourage citizens to get involved with the city's development, including with decisions like the Terraces.

"It would be great if students would be willing to get involved in decisions such as these. The first step would be being informed about what issues are being discussed. It is the best way to keep up on what is happening in the city and what issues are being considered by the City's Council, commissions, and committees. Students [should] know that their input is welcome," Anduri said.

Inclusive Lafayette, a pro affordable housing organization, provides ways for community members to be involved in projects such as the Lafayette Terraces.

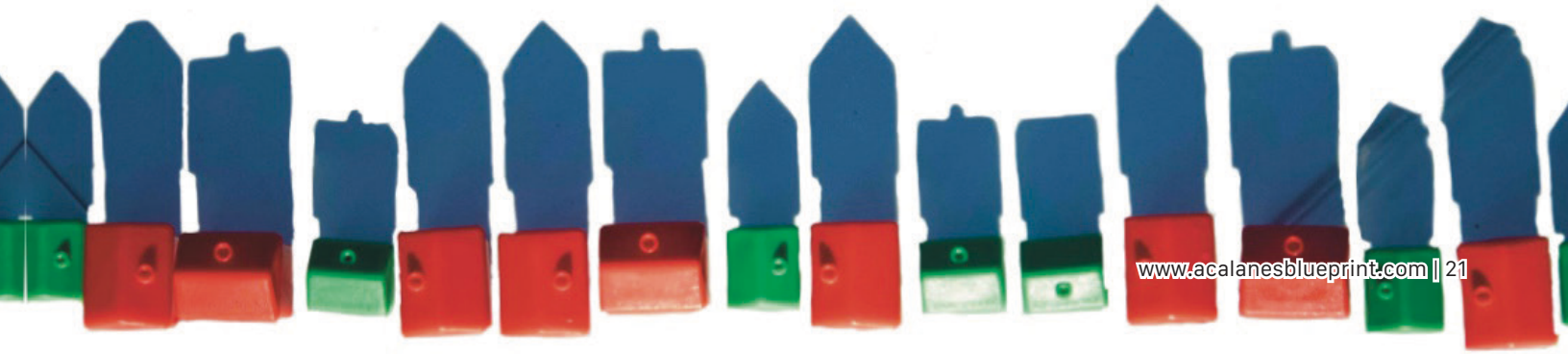
"I think that building housing, affordable or not, is important in California. We have a housing crisis in California. There are simply not enough houses to go around and the result is that rent has gone up which makes California less affordable and therefore less competitive with other states," Falk said.

"The way to get involved with our work is to go to our website and there's a Google form on there where you can respond ... give us some information, and we'll reach out to you," Levine said.

There are many other ways to get involved including engaging with the city Council's activities, connecting with city staff and councilmembers, or even providing public comment at meetings.

"The first step would be being informed about what issues are being discussed. The best way to do that is to sign up for the city's weekly newsletter, The Weekly Roundup," Anduri said. "The second step, after learning about an issue and wanting to get involved, is to … attend the Council, commission or committee meeting where the item is being discussed."

Maddyx Bride, Head Copy Editor, contributed interviews to this piece.



Fall Jazz Concert Hits a High Note

Local jazz musician and students perform at Acalanes

Hannah Geraghty, Sophie Gold, and Jenna Kessler | Business Managers
Photo by Jenna Kessler

An audience taps their feet as basses strum and trumpets blare. As lights shine down on the band, music resonates throughout the space.

The Stanley Middle School Jazz Messengers, Acalanes Jazz Ensemble, Acalanes Jazz Combo, and Kyle Athayde performed at the Fall Jazz Concert on Nov. 20 in the Acalanes Performing Arts Center.

The tradition of the Fall Jazz Concert continues this year, preceding the annual Instrumental Winter Concert, which features the other Acalanes instrumental groups, and the Winter Choir Concert. The concert opened with the Acalanes Jazz Combo, then the Stanley Messengers, and finally the Acalanes Jazz Ensemble.

"We traditionally have a jazz-only concert in the fall semester to prepare us for our first competition. Because the Winter Concert has other groups and there's a lot of repertoire for the jazz to perform, we try to keep those on separate nights," Acalanes Instrumental Music Director Edwin Cordoba said.

Lafayette Partners in Education (LPIE) and Acalanes Performing Arts Boosters (APAB) financially supported the Fall Jazz Concert and the other instrumental concerts and competitions throughout the year.

"LPIE provides funding for the arts education our kids get in the classroom, and APAB put on events outside the classroom like this concert. The performing arts ultimately rely on generous donations from the community," APAB Treasurer Paul Joseph said.

At the concert, members of the Stanley Jazz Messengers played a variety of tunes, including songs from jazz legends such as Duke Ellington.

"I chose 'Flight of the Foo Birds' by Neil Hefti [and] 'Night and Day' by Cole Porter because [they are] great jazz standards, and this particular arrangement includes both swing and Latin jazz styles," Stanley Middle School Band and Chorus Director Todd Minson said. "I [also] picked the theme song to "Bluey" because my youngest child loves Bluey, and I noticed that the theme song is actually a lot of fun, and can be used to encourage improvisation."

The Stanley Jazz Messengers prepared for months, working on building their skills to display at the concert.

"We've been rehearsing some songs for months, others for just a few days. I like to challenge kids sometimes with learning a song quickly so that they realize that they are capable of doing difficult things," Minson said.

Some found value in teaching different age groups.

"I really loved having the middle schoolers play alongside us. This is a great way for us to have a combined effort with our middle school theater, the Stanley Messengers, and their performance was really lovely," Cordoba said.

The Acalanes Jazz Combo, composed of seniors Braeden Christie, Isaac Hutton, Nathan Joseph, Rohini Vrajmohan, and Leo Wornick, and sophomore Noah Mosley, opened the concert with "Tiny Capers," "Caravan," "Keep on Walking," and "Backyard Groove." The Acalanes Jazz Ensemble played five songs, chosen to exhibit students' musical talent.

"[We opened] up with a piece called 'Cut to the Chase' which is a B-bop fast opener, followed by a Brazilian Samba titled 'Trinita' featuring our trumpet senior Rohini Vrajmohan," Cordoba said. "We also [played] an arrangement of a famous piece entitled 'Anthropologie' which is a really technically difficult piece by Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie. [We] also [played] a merengue that involves a little bit of dancing and some chanting."

The directors put a lot of thought into choosing the repertoire for the Fall Jazz Concert, keeping students' musical education in mind. *Continued on 32*

ARTIST OF THE ISSUE

Maya Shoenhair

Exploring the forms, functionality, and artistic flow of potter Shoenhair's clay creations

Melina Galacatos and Audrey Parkin | Online Editors
Courtesy Photo by Anjelica Selden

From kitchenware to charms or ornaments, working with ceramics is a versatile art form that produces unique pieces with various textures, shapes, and colors.

Through 3D art classes at Acalanes, as well as wheel classes at downtown Lafayette art studio, The Art Room, Shoenhair has developed her pottery-making skills and hopes to continue progressing and sharing her work with community members, largely by making gifts.

Shoenhair's mother and aunt are both ceramic artists as well, and their work has been highly influential in her journey of exploring the art form.

"When I was growing up I would see their [work] around my house and I would be like "oh that's a pot we bought," but no, actually my mom just made it, so I thought that was pretty interesting. I [saw that] and thought 'I want to make something like that,'" junior Maya Shoenhair said.

In recent years, Shoenhair has pursued this interest by taking 3D Art classes at Acalanes High School. After reaching the second and highest 3D art level at school, she was still inspired and curious, so she has been building on these skills even further by taking classes at The Art Room in Lafayette.

"I [wanted] more freedom with what I make and I have access to different people who are teaching me things, but also seeing other peoples' art and techniques that they use help inspire me," Shoenhair said.

These classes outside of school have contributed to Shoenhair's developing pottery skills.

"In the time that I have known Maya, I have seen steady growth in her pottery … I'm excited to see where it leads her," staff at The Art Room, Samantha Graham said.

As she has learned and developed her techniques, both her understanding and passion for the art form and the creative process as a whole have grown. She says she enjoys the physical hands-on nature of pottery along with the fluidity of the process.

"I might have an idea of what I want to do, but as I'm working with it, sometimes my ideas change and the final product turns out pretty different based on ideas I come up with as I'm working on it," Shoenhair said.

Despite Shoenhair's passion for making ceramics, she says the process itself can be tricky and tedious.

"It's very complicated, and a lot of it you have to figure out by yourself through trial and error. A lot of small things can cause a piece to collapse or mess it up," Shoenhair said, "My current teacher at The Art Room is really technical with things that she explains and can give you specific things to think about that some of my other teachers haven't [to help me improve]," Shoenhair said.

From a less experienced perspective of a non-ceramicist, the process proves to be especially difficult.

"[Ceramics] was one of the hardest things I've tried. It's difficult to come up with ideas and then execute them, I'm very impressed by her skills," junior Alvera Bamorya said.

However, all the intricate details and technical aspects are part of why Shoenhair enjoys the art form.

"I like how it's very dimensional. You can do a lot more with it than [2D art,] like textures. [Pottery] can also be useful items instead of just something to look at," Shoenhair said.

Her love of pottery and drive for the creative process allows Shoenhair to push through, but she is further inspired by a love of gifting and likes to share her talent by making gifts for her friends.

"I can make things that suit a person or something that I think they could use and give that to people as presents. I think about other people a lot when I make my art," Shoenhair said.

Recently, she made a small catch-all dish as a present for her friend, Bamorya.

"Maya made me this ceramic small bowl that's pink with purple splatters on it. It sits on my vanity and I use it to keep my jewelry when I set my clothes out for the next day. It's a lot easier than reaching into my jewelry box every morning," Bamorya said.

Shoenhair continues to expand her involvement with ceramics in the local art community, and plans on attending an upcoming event at The Art Room.

"On December 15, 2024, from 10 to 5, we will be having a winter sale to showcase some of the art from students and teachers at The Art Room. Ceramics, drawings, paintings, and all kinds of art will be for sale and all proceeds will go directly to the artists," Graham said.

Although she does not plan on selling any of her work, as it is mostly personal gifts made for people she knows, Shoenhair plans on volunteering at the event.

"Maya brightens the room when she enters. She engages with her peers with genuine interest and speaks to everyone with kindness. She strengthens our ceramic community just by being her," Graham said.

Book Nook

Honoring American Roots: Books by Native American Authors

Spread by Cade McAlister

***Woman of Light* by Kali Fajardo-Anstine**
Emily Roberts | Print Feature Editor

"Our existence shouldn't depend on luck. It should depend on justice, what is good, what is right."

Kali Fajardo-Anstine's *Woman of Light* is a dazzling, multigenerational novel that immerses readers in the complex and culturally rich American West through the eyes of an Indigenous Chicano Family. Spanning five generations, the book centers on teenager Luz "Little Light" Lopez in Denver in the 1930s as she tries to create a life for herself despite the hatred she faces. As Luz begins to navigate her journey, visions transport her back to her ancestor's homeland in the Lost Territory. She realizes it is up to her to save the stories of her people and family before it is too late.

Fajardo-Anstine draws from her own heritage and family history to beautifully weave together themes of self-discovery, identity, and resilience. Additionally, the novel underscores the persistent injustices Indigenous families face while highlighting their endurance and strength through generations. Overall, *Woman of Light* is perfect for history lovers and those seeking a deeply meaningful story.

***The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie**
Molly Connelly | Print Feature Editor

"Life is a constant struggle between being an individual and being a member of the community"

Sherman Alexie blends humor and heartbreak in his semi-autobiographical novel, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, which tells the story of Junior, a 14-year-old boy living on the Spokane Reservation. Alexie details Junior's struggles with hydrocephalus, a condition where an excess of fluid puts too much pressure on one's brain, which makes him a target for bullying. Junior experiences change when he transfers to a predominantly white high school far away from his home. Junior exemplifies a story of defiance, as he thrives academically, joins the basketball team, and begins to make friends.

Alexie draws on his own life experiences: growing up on the Spokane Reservation, having the same medical condition as Junior, and transferring to a new high school. However, many have chosen not to read this book due to him admitting to sexual harassment and misconduct. For those who may not be comfortable supporting this author, purchasing a secondhand novel or checking out a copy from a library may be a good option.

***Code Talker* by Joseph Bruchac**
Mika Katznelson | Staff Writer

"Strong words outlast the paper they are written upon"

Joseph Bruchac's *Code Talker* is a captivating historical novel that takes readers deep into the experience of Navajo code talkers during World War II. Through the journey of 16-year-old Ned Begay, who is recruited by the U.S. military to use his native language to create an unbreakable code for the war effort against Japan, Bruchac underlines the cultural difficulties Navajos had in an Anglicized society. As Ned moves from his homeland to the frontlines, he struggles with honoring his Navajo heritage and respecting his duties as a soldier.

Bruchac seamlessly blends historical fiction with themes of identity, sacrifice, and cultural preservation. *Code Talker* honors the vital contributions of the Navajo people during the war, making it an enlightening read for anyone interested in military history, Navajo culture, and the resilience of Native American communities.

***And Then She Fell* by Alicia Elliott**
Gwyneth Lee | Staff Writer

"Who wants to admit that there was a moment when they saw disaster coming but chose to do nothing"

Alicia Elliott's novel, *And Then She Fell*, is the modern retelling of the Haudenosaunee creation story, focusing on the perspective of Alice, a young Canadian Mohawk Nation woman. Alice moves off of her reservation to a posh neighborhood in Toronto after marrying a white professor and having a daughter. Their life should be perfect, yet Alice finds herself having vivid hallucinations that worsen by the day. She feels out of place in her new home and struggles to connect with anyone, even her own daughter.

Elliott models her novel on a structure similar to that of other Indigenous peoples. *And Then She Fell* follows a nonlinear storyline, adding to the complexities of Alice's mind and paying tribute to the values of relationships and cycles central to the Indigenous people in the Toronto region. The story is a great pick for anyone looking to explore themes of racism, sexism, and the cultural impacts of colonialism.

REUBNER'S RECORDS

A Review of Tyler, The Creator's Chromakopia

Cole Ruebner | Contributing Writer
Spread by Justin Rosenblatt

Tyler's journey as an artist from over ten years ago to now is a sight to behold. Beginning with the collective Odd Future and artists like Frank Ocean and Earl Sweatshirt, a young Tyler broke out into the spotlight through shocking, horrorcore-inspired lyrics and a flippant sense of humor. Over the years, however, he has matured and molded his image into the triple-threat creative he is known to be. He designs clothing, acts, and has directed his attention towards other musical genres like pop and RnB. Now, with *Chromakopia*, Tyler utilizes his more mature perspectives to dive into his psyche, letting the listener in on his beliefs and experiences as a person, not just a musician.

Throughout the album, Tyler uncovers aspects of himself that had rarely been touched on in his previous music. He reflects on his cultural background, relationship with fame, and family struggles with vivid storytelling and introspection. One of the album's main draws is the creative techniques that Tyler employs to get his messaging across. For example, the song "I Killed You" reflects on Tyler's relationship with his hair over the years, and how he has struggled to conform to expectations of it. Longtime fans have seen Tyler's hair fluctuate from many different styles, from *Flower Boy's* cheetah-print to *Igor's* iconic blonde bowl-cut wig to now, with *Chromakopia's* figurehead wearing hair in the shape of horns. This song explores how these changing hairstyles contradict his views towards the Black experience, referring to hair as an example of the demand to conform to white expectations. The topic is explored with a refreshing amount of maturity and introspection, contrasting greatly with the shocking, rebellious nature of his earlier projects.

Instrumentally, *Chromakopia* does not diverge far from Tyler's older works, insted, he builds upon the skills that are showcased in his previous albums. The production feels like an amalgamation of his past three works, featuring plenty of blown-out horns from the *Call Me if You Get Lost* era, gritty bass reminiscent of *Igor*, and lush chords harkening back to the *Flower Boy* days. These aspects do not always come together cohesively, but the mixture provides a fitting backdrop for Tyler to wear his heart on his sleeve.

While the instrumentals are overall very solid, most songs tend to take the slow burn route, starting minimalistic and slowly building up into massive crescendos. "St. Chroma," "I Killed You," and "Like Him," are a few examples of this, but the one that stands out the most is "Sticky." It is meant to be an energetic posse cut featuring GloRilla, Sexxy Red, and Lil Wayne, but the better part of the first minute is spent with scant whistles and chants as the backbone behind Tyler's lyrics. The song eventually builds into a thrilling marching band-style rap track. The progression is gratifying, but the slow nature of a lot of the songs may put off some listeners.

My favorite song on *Chromakopia* is "Thought I Was Dead," a more clear-cut hip-hop track backed by harsh horns and Pharrell-influenced raw percussion. ScHoolboy Q brings a standout guest verse, but Tyler's final verse is what really steals the show. His charisma, flow, and delivery are at their peak, exploring the artist's spiteful perspective on fame and celebrity culture.

While *Chromakopia* is without a doubt a very solid release, it is not without its drawbacks. On multiple occasions, Tyler's ambition gets the best of him as he presents unique ideas that he cannot flesh out into complete songs, sometimes letting the messaging get in the way of the actual musicality. In my eyes, only two tracks suffer from this problem, but it still is worth pointing out. "Judge Judy" is, in my opinion, the weakest song on the album, and while its themes of sexual freedom are interesting, it is explored in a slightly off-putting way. Tyler's sing-songy delivery feels too goofy to be taken seriously, and the psychedelic, guitar-heavy instrumental comes off as a bit sleepy. "Noid" is the second example of this, and while this time the lyrical ideas are conveyed with far more grace and intricacy, the sampled instrumental ends up feeling a bit too flat, lacking the lush, layered feel that made Tyler such an accomplished producer in the first place.

Overall *Chromakopia* is a mixed bag, but it would be a high point for many other artists. Tyler's releases as of late have been so incredible that even an album as good as Chromakopia might be seen as less than by comparison. However, this project's ability to shed new light on such an already well-established musician cements it as one of the most important works in Tyler's discography. While there are fair criticisms to be made towards *Chromakopia*, it still deserves to be celebrated as a very solid addition to the catalog of one of the most consistent artists in the mainstream.

Apple Cider Doughnuts

Emily Roberts and Grace Wolpert | Print Feature Editor and Arts Copy Editor

Photo by Emily Roberts

Apple cider doughnuts are the perfect way to embrace the flavors of fall. With a delightful combination of warm spices and the sweetness of apple cider, these doughnuts offer a cozy, comforting experience. They are baked to perfection and rolled in sugar, making them irresistibly delicious with a crisp exterior and a soft, fluffy interior. When freshly made, they are a must-try treat that embodies the essence of autumn in every bite.

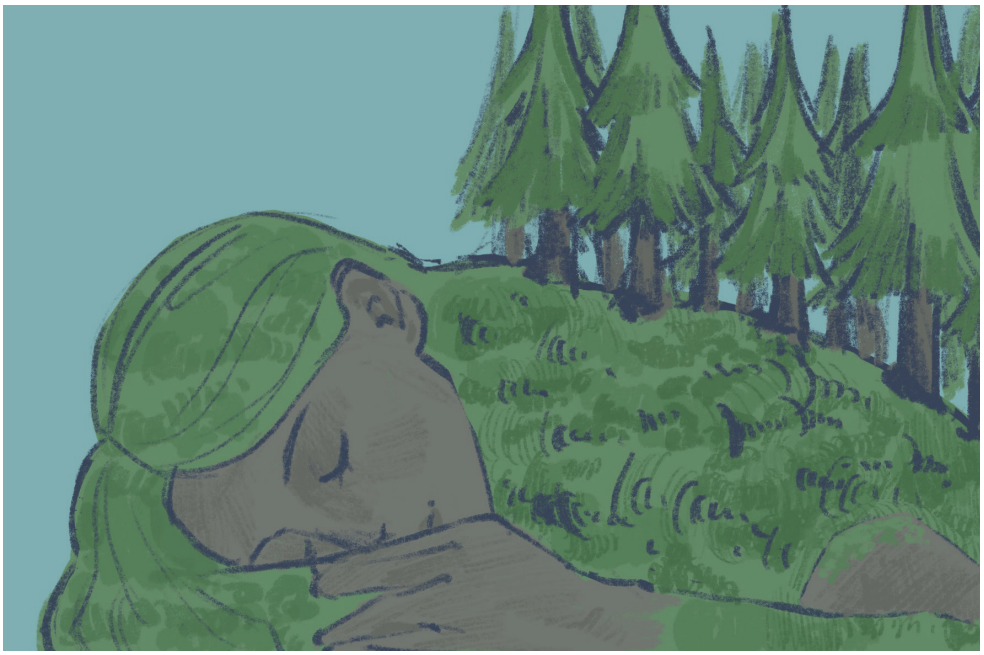
Ingredients:

Batter
1 and 1/2 cups apple cider
2 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
3/4 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon apple pie spice*
1/4 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons melted unsalted butter
1 large egg at room temperature
1/2 cup packed light or dark brown sugar
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1/2 cup milk, at room temperature
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

Topping
1 cup granulated sugar
3/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
3/4 teaspoon apple pie spice*
6 tablespoons melted unsalted butter
*Apple pie spice can be made using 4 parts cinnamon, 2 parts nutmeg, and 1 part cardamom

Instructions:
1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease the doughnut pan.
2. In a small saucepan, simmer apple cider over low heat, stirring occasionally until it reduces to about ½ cup, around 20 minutes.
3. Whisk together flour, baking soda, baking powder, cinnamon, apple pie spice, and salt in a large bowl and set aside.
4. In a separate bowl, whisk together melted butter, egg, brown sugar, granulated sugar, milk, and vanilla extract together until combined.
5. Pour wet ingredients into dry ingredients and add in apple cider. Whisk together until smooth
6. Spoon or pipe doughnut batter into rounds. Fill each cavity about halfway.
7. Bake for 10-11 minutes or until the tops are golden brown. Cool doughnuts for two minutes in a pan before transferring to a wire rack.
8. Combine topping ingredients (granulated sugar, cinnamon, and apple pie) in a bowl large enough to coat the doughnuts.
9. Melt 6 tablespoons of butter and dunk doughnuts fully in melted butter. Then toss the doughnuts in the spiced sugar topping.

QUOTE OF THE ISSUE



"Adopt the pace of nature: her secret is patience" - Ralph Waldo Emerson

Avery Robb | Print Editor-in-Chief

Graphic by Bo Chevaleau

In today's fast-paced world, I often feel less like a person and more like a machine, mindlessly completing task after task and barely pausing to breathe. Our culture values productivity and advancement, driving an increasingly mechanized way of life. It is like a river that sweeps you away. Once you step foot onto its shore you become entrapped.

Over time, this relentless pace takes a toll, corrupting our thoughts and making us forget that we are even a part of the system. We chase immediate results, cramming facts into our brains and rushing to check off boxes on a to-do list rather than savoring the process of thoughtful and meaningful work.

I am a product of this mindset. I constantly feel disconnected from what truly matters. It is as if I am being wrapped up in an invisible current. Some days it feels like drowning. I am being pushed under the water and just when I manage to reach the surface, another wave crashes down on me. Sometimes it feels like the only way to shore is to let the tide carry me there.

I frequently find myself staring blankly at empty documents, my cursor flashing every other second, seeming to taunt me. The weight of everything I need to do blocks me from focusing on the task at hand.

I remember one weekend when the weight felt unbearable. I simply got up and left. I left everything behind, driving aimlessly, hoping to clear my mind. Eventually, I ended up at my childhood home, unsure of what I was hoping to find. In the quiet of my mind, a grainy memory began to play behind my eyes. Using it as a guide, I found myself at the foot of a familiar gravel pathway and set off at once.

The trail winded through towering trees that filled the horizon, but soon I emerged from the forest. Unable to see from where I stood, I set off trudging up a hill. As I climbed, I paused to glance behind me and admired the distance I had traveled. The trees that once loomed over me at the start of my journey looked miniature in comparison to where I stood now.

As I continued, I reached a fork that split into another section of trees. I chose to go left, climbing over clusters of bending oaks. Soon speckles of vibrant crimson red began peeking through the greenery and expanded into a grove of fiery maple trees surrounding a bench on a cliff edge. I was entranced by the serene moment before me. I sat for a moment, breathing in the crisp air and watching my breath condense into little wisps that disappeared into the sky. The lights of the city illuminated my view, mirroring a starry night sky.

As the sun dipped below the horizon the moon began to rise. I sat there feeling my mind drift amongst nature's steady rhythm. It seemed to envelop me. I sat there listening to the birds chirping and the gentle swaying of the maple leaves. I felt completely at peace.

In the natural world, nothing is rushed. There is no deadline to meet or ladders to climb. Everything moves at its own deliberate pace. This patience is not a weakness, it is a quiet strength. Gentle yet resolute.

In that moment of stillness on the trail, I felt nature's current carrying me. I left my worries at the base of the hill and allowed myself to align with the earth's slow and steady pulse. Instead of spending hours painfully piecing together words on a page, I took time to breathe. After I got home words began to flow from my mind, each a stepping stone along the pathway being created on my page.

By embracing the patience of nature, we can see the intricacies of life. Slowing down doesn't mean surrendering our ambitions. It means approaching our goals with renewed clarity and purpose. Although working nonstop might pan out in the short run, it is not sustainable. By taking a moment for inner peace we can ground ourselves and refresh our minds so that when we return to everyday life, we are filled with a greater sense of purpose. In learning to slow down and adopt the patience of nature we can transform our understanding of ourselves and pave a more meaningful pathway forwards.

La Mode

seasonal shopping

CURATING THE ULTIMATE HOLIDAY WISH LIST

Aya O'Neal, Cara Hamilton, and Olivia Silverstein | Online Content Manager and Staff Writers
Spread by Aya O'Neal and Cara Hamilton

As the holiday season approaches, it's the perfect time to refresh your wish list with fashion-forward finds and thoughtful gift ideas. Whether you're looking to unwrap the latest trends or searching for the perfect presents for loved ones, this guide offers stylish and seasonal inspiration to help elevate your holiday gifting game. From cozy tops to comfy shoes, there's something for everyone on this list.

Quilted Jackets

Quilted jackets are a fairly new trend this year, blending the timeless charm of classic quilting with the previously trending modern puffer jackets. Not only do these jackets align with the cottage-core aesthetic, but they offer both comfort and coziness, making them a must-have for the colder months. Additionally, they are perfect for the spring months following winter with their floral patterns and versatility.

Belts

Belts are an often forgotten accessory, but they can completely transform an outfit. They break up color and patterns, creating a seamless look that pulls everything together without being too overwhelming. Whether a Wild West styled belt with an intricate buckle or a thin simple belt, this accessory is the perfect way to add. personality to any simple outfit.

Headbands

Headbands are simple and sophisticated accessories that add a tasteful touch to an outfit. With styles that emulate those of past decades or modern fashions that are modest and graceful, matching a headband to the rest of an outfit makes for a classy, put-together look.

Ballet Flats

If you're looking for a shoe that's both elegant and comfy, the ballet flat is right up your alley. Its aesthetically pleasing design elevates any outfit to be more glamorous. They can be dressed down for casual winter shopping sprees or dressed up for your next holiday party. With endless colors and designs, the ballet flat is the perfect addition to your holiday wardrobe.

Embroidered Jeans

Jeans need no introduction, but add an embroidered pattern or some patchwork, and you have a pair that stands out from the rest. Whether DIYed with inspiration from Pinterest, thrifted in a local store, or bought new from a small boutique, these are a leg up from any basic pair of jeans. They offer a fun, personalized twist to any wardrobe, making them a must-have for those looking to add some flair to their everyday look.

Chunky Rings

All sorts of chunky rings, from vintage to brand-new, are a bold staple in any jewelry collection. Whether all silver, all gold, or mixed metals, wearing multiple chunky rings helps tie an outfit together while adding a unique touch.

Slippers

It would not be a holiday wishlist without the number one staple for high schoolers: slippers. With the recent focus on comfortability in closets, slippers are seen during the winter season regardless of geographic location. The styles are endless with booties, fuzzies, and platform slippers being trendy choices to look into. Slippers are an absolute staple for all teens looking to keep their feet warm this chilly winter.

Initial Jewelry

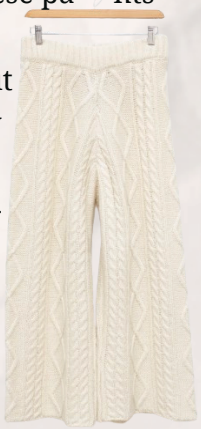
Necklaces, bracelets, or rings with one's own (or another's) initials can add a personal touch to a jewelry collection. Finding high-quality pieces that last and will neither tarnish nor turn your skin green is key to ensuring these simple, yet stunning items remain a staple in your wardrobe for years to come. Whether for yourself or as an intimate gift for friends or family, these simple yet stunning everyday pieces can complement almost any outfit.

Graphic Tees

Simple, baggy, or fitted shirts are a staple in many wardrobes. Graphics are a great addition to elevate a basic T-shirt, adding personality and style to a simple staple. From band shirts to branded tees, graphic tees are gender-neutral, versatile, and perfect for any style or aesthetic, making them a year-round staple that can be worn well into spring and summer.

Knit Pants

For those who can't get enough sweaters, consider picking up a pair of knitted pants. These pants can be worn both cuddled up at home with a good book, or out on a winter morning walk. Cozy and perfect for winter, the knit pant adds an extra layer of warmth and can be dressed up or down for all sorts of occasions.



Quarter Zips

Quarter zips have always been popular in fashion subcategories, but they are shining brighter than ever this year with the 'old-money' style trending. The simple and elegant designs can make any casual outfit appear classy, while fleece quarter zips offer a more forestry look perfect for embracing the outdoors. Gender-neutral and versatile, these quarter zips combine comfort and sophistication and are the perfect gift to elevate your wardrobe.

Christmas Movie Reviews

Comparing modern renditions of holiday movies to their original counterparts

Spread by Haley Chelemedos

As temperatures drop and rain clouds form above, staying inside and watching a holiday classic becomes increasingly enticing. In turn, streaming services are abundant with new and improved productions of favorite classic tales.

A Christmas Carol

Neve Murphy | Print Opinion Editor

*A Christmas Caro*l is a holiday story that fills the entertainment scene during the winter season. The tale first appeared as a novel by Charles Dickens in 1843. Dickens created the classic story of Ebenezer Scrooge, a selfish businessman who rejects all Christmas festivities. The ghost of Scrooge's late business partner, Jacob Marley, visits Scrooge and condemns his ways by introducing the ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Yet to Come. The first ghost reminds Scrooge of how he appreciated Christmas as a child. The second reflects the experience of an impoverished family who, despite their circumstances, celebrates wholeheartedly while the wealthy Scrooge abstains from the festivities. The last ghost reflects Scrooge after he has died and no one visits his grave because his cruel actions have driven everyone away. Scrooge wakes up with a newfound sense of joy and holiday spirit.

Since the printing of this story, both film and play companies have produced over 100 renditions. The 1901 film adaption of this tale, *Scrooge, or Marley's Ghost* was the first to portray this tale visually. Despite this being a holiday movie, the mood is eerie.

Netflix released the newest rendition of this story to date in 2022: *Scrooge: A Christmas Carol*. Unlike the original movie which contains elements of horror, the new animated film is a story of adventure and is marketed to children. Across all renditions, the positive messages, emphasizing compassion and generosity, remain central to the plot.

How the Grinch Stole Christmas!

Grace Wolpert | Arts Copy Editor

How the Grinch Stole Christmas!, by Dr. Suess, is a classic well-loved by many during the holiday season. The book follows the tale of a green-haired creature who lives atop a large mountain overlooking the town of Whoville. The townsfolk of Whoville called the Whos, have a tenacious Christmas spirit, and the Grinch, with his heart "two sizes too small," wishes to crush their holiday joy. The Grinch then devises a plan to stop Christmas by stealing all the Christmas decorations, presents, and food in town. Despite waking to the disappearance of their gifts, food, and decor, the Whos still come together to celebrate the holiday. The Grinch then realizes that Christmas is more than wealth or the material items one may receive, rather Christmas is about giving love and joy to others.

This wholesome message is reflected in the 1966 animated film, "How the Grinch Stole Christmas!" which takes on the book almost word for word. The short film stars Boris Karloff as the voice of the Grinch with Chuck Jones directing the film. On the contrary, the live-action rendition from 2000 directed by Ron Howard and starring Jim Carrey as the Grinch, takes on a slightly different storyline. The live-action film adds depth to the Grinch's character by exploring his painful childhood in Whoville, where his peers bullied and excluded him. This backstory explains his deep hatred of Christmas. The Grinch's character is more complex and new characters like his love interest, Martha May Whovier, further develop this story. However, the 1966 animated version, which stays true to Dr. Suess's book, does not explain why the Grinch is grumpy about the holidays. His heart is simply too small, and his transformation centers around realizing that Christmas is about true, not material goods.

The animation is lighter and more whimsical with Karloff's restrained performance as the Grinch contrasting Carrey's more animated, comedic portrayal. Overall, the 1966 animated film is very brief and does not develop the characters the same way that the 2000 film does, making the movie less enjoyable. The 2000 film has complex character development and comedic aspects making it a must-watch during the holiday season.

Frosty the Snowman
Noah Frankel | Staff Writer

The T.V. Special "Frosty the Snowman," based on a song by Steve Nelson and Walter E. Rollins first aired on Dec. 7, 1969. A local children's teacher hired Professor Hinkle to entertain the children of a small town with a magic show. However, after he fails to pull a rabbit out of a hat, it runs away and uses the hat it is wearing to bring the snowman the children built to life. One of the girls, Karen, names him Frosty. Shortly after, the rabbit, Hocus-Pocus, and Karen realize Frosty will melt if they don't bring him to the North Pole. They embark on a journey to save Frosty and uphold their belief in magic, but the evil magician Hinkle has secretly tagged along. Though the movie is far from modern, it is still a nostalgic film to watch and relax with family and friends during the holiday season.

On Oct. 8, 2005, Classic Media released a more modern version, *The Legend of Frosty the Snowman*. In this story, Frosty arrives in a new town to bring joy and excitement to the kids. The mayor, Tinkleton, has other ideas and tries to stifle the children's belief in magic. Ultimately, the magic of the hat and Frosty's spirit inspire the townspeople to embrace the fun and creativity they had lost.

Overall, the 2005 film did not have as much of a lighthearted and entertaining story as the original 1969 version. Even though the visuals are more modern, they do not have the same style as the original, which feels homey and classic. Plus the characters are not as full of life and festive. So, the original version is a better pick when looking for a holiday movie because of its energetic characters that spread magic and happiness.

The Nutcracker
Sela Sarbiewski | Staff Writer

Originating from a ballet in 19th century Russia, *The Nutcracker* is a class holiday film following the story of a young girl named Clara on Christmas. She receives a Nutcracker doll for Christmas that transforms into a prince to accompany her on her journey to the Land of Snow and the Kingdom of Sweets. After dreaming of an epic battle between the Nutcracker and an evil Rat King, she and the prince meet the Sugar Plum Fairy in the Kingdom of Sweets who leads them in the direction of magic and festivities. The soundtrack and characters in this ballet quickly became a staple in holiday culture around the world.

This traditional ballet has been turned into many films, namely the 2018 rendition of "The Nutcracker and the Four Realms" by Disney. In this movie, the Nutcracker is not a cursed prince that accompanies Clara on her travels, but rather a music box that represents her own inner strength and that requires a golden key only found in the magical realms. Another difference in this rendition is that the Sugar Plum Fairy from the Land of Sweets is a villain, but they are primarily at war against the Rat King from the Land of Amusements. Throughout the movie, Clara also travels to new realms such as the Land of Snowflakes, and the Land of Flowers. In the end, Clara and a soldier named Philip succeed in restoring peace to the Four realms.

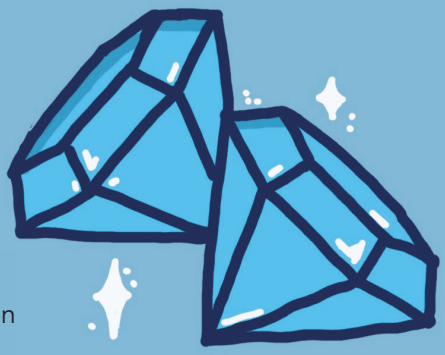
Overall, this rendition's choice of starring actors and heightened plot points make it a more engaging film. However, the classic tale of the Nutcracker with the cursed prince is very enjoyable in live performances like holiday ballets.

A Charlie Brown Christmas
Sela Sarbiewski | Staff Writer

A Charlie Brown Christmas is a classic holiday tale originally animated in 1965. The story follows a young boy, Charlie in his search for the true meaning of Christmas. Growing disillusioned when his friends only seem to care about the materialistic side of the holidays, he attempts to draw out true Christmas spirit. Charlie believes he has failed after picking out a small, scraggly Christmas tree. However, his friend Linus comforts him and tells their friends that Christmas is more than the tree one has. They celebrate by decorating Charlie's tree together.

Since this version aired in 1965, Apple TV bought the rights to alter the film. In some renditions today, Snoopy is not shown singing, as he was in the original. Other small changes include remastered soundtracks and music cues. Overall, these altercations make the modernized version a more engaging watch for the holiday season.

BLUETUNES



Underrated Songs by Popular Artists

Olivia Foster and Zoe Stafford | Head Section Editor and Azure Editor-in-Chief

We all know the songs released by well-known artists in the music industry that are instantly recognizable and cherished by listeners. However, some tracks that mainstream artists release do not make it to radio stations or get noteworthy recognition. This edition of *BlueTunes* highlights great songs by familiar faces in the music industry that have yet to receive the appreciation they may very well deserve.

Fall Jazz Concert

Continued from 22

"Programming is a process that takes many hours of consideration because not only do we want to create a well-rounded diet for the students but we also want to feature our strong musicians and so we have a few really incredible seniors this year that are doing a really outstanding job, so we want to highlight them and pick a rep that fits ... like a Cinderella shoe," Cordoba said.

Students put hours of effort into the preparation for the Fall Jazz Concert to perform the songs to the best of their ability.

"Our full jazz band rehearses four days a week. [We ran] through songs and [practiced] challenging sections," Nathan Joseph said. "Our Jazz Combo rehearses outside of class time. We chose our songs and then rehearsed them together several times during academy and after school."

For the Acalanes Jazz Ensemble, months of work culminate in this concert which serves as a preparation for upcoming competition.

"The preparation for this concert started during auditions last year when we started to develop our individual musicians and prepare them for performances. Right now our Fall Jazz Concert is a preview to our upcoming College of San Mateo Jazz Festival which is happening on Friday, Nov. 22, so we're really excited to preview our work and to kind of prepare for our festival coming up," Cordoba said.

Some of the pieces required audience participation such as a merengue the Acalanes Jazz Ensemble performed, adding to the concert experience.

"My favorite part of the concert was the performance of 'Merengue de HMA' when the band came to the front of the stage and several performers took solos while the audience was encouraged to participate. Mr. Cordoba and the band created a real feeling of a joyful musical community to close the concert," Paul Joseph said.

Acalanes alum Kyle Athayde joined the Acalanes Jazz Combo and Jazz Ensemble, providing feedback and performing with the groups.

"It was amazing playing with Kyle and he helped everyone in the band. He joined us for a couple rehearsals before the concert and gave us so many helpful insights," Vrajmohan said.

During the Acalanes Jazz Combo's performance, Athayde and Vrajmohan were featured on the trumpet.

"My favorite song to perform was 'Trinita' because I had the opportunity to play a solo feature piece with Kyle Athayde. It was the one where we were at the front of the stage. The song itself is extremely beautiful and expressive," Vrajmohan said.

This concert featured various skill sets, ranging from middle school musicians to professional musicians, and provided a unique opportunity for students to see what they are capable of achieving at higher levels.

"I just like seeing what the next progression of jazz playing is like," cello player and Stanley Middle School student Tyler Leonard said.

Audience members enjoyed seeing the different bands playing on the same stage, citing the worth of connection across schools.

"It's so valuable, it's valuable for the kids, it's valuable for the community, for the parents, to see the progression, to have the opportunity for the kids to see different levels and kids that they know," Acalanes parent Maura Warren said. "I know when my son was at Stanley the opportunity to come to Acalanes was a big deal to see what the older kids are doing. It's valuable to bring people in the community together to experience music."

The Fall Jazz Concert engaged numerous members of the community from Acalanes and the wider area.

"In addition to simply being a night of fantastic music played by a couple of the best middle school and high school jazz bands in Northern California, the event was a demonstration and celebration of how jazz is thriving among the young people in our community," Paul Joseph said. "My hope and expectation is that the concert encourages students and parents to keep pursuing this art form, knowing they live in a community that provides such strong support, resources, and opportunities for participating in it."

Creating Copies or Cultivating Creativity

The consequences of public schools' limited emphasis on creativity

Cameron Powell | Online Editor-in-Chief

Graphic by Sof Cerruti

"Open your computers to see the instructions for the assignment." Perhaps most students have grown used to this statement. In fact, the words almost bring me comfort. There before me, a list of step-by-step instructions. Simply complete each task and submit.

In reality, such assignments, which feed students answers to memorize and repeat, take away opportunities for creative expression. Creativity, the ability to think outside the expected path and produce original ideas, becomes increasingly detached from academic classes as one enters higher grade levels: art classes focus heavily on creativity, while core academic classes often disregard it.

From my experience, many core academic classes function in a cycle with limited variation: learning material through notes, reading, and discussions followed by exams to test the amount of knowledge students obtained. This pattern has led students to become accustomed to performing in a certain way to demonstrate their knowledge: select the correct answer or fill in the blank. So when teachers present them with vague instructions or directions to use their imagination, many are lost. This culture of prioritizing test outcomes and grades over learning itself is harmful to students because they begin to lack intrinsic motivation within their studies or an internal desire to comprehend the content. This is why all high school courses, not only select art classes, should include creativity as a primary skill rather than prioritizing traditional forms of lecturing and exams.

In a *Blueprint* survey with 130 Acalanes student respondents, 79.2 percent reported that they consider themselves to be creative, while the other 20.8 percent do not. However, 90.8 percent reported that they believe creativity can be improved with practice. Thus, the vast majority of students are open-minded towards taking on opportunities for creative expression despite a smaller number of these students considering themselves creative.

A lack of teachers assigning creative projects is not the entirety of the problem, as many teachers do fit some creative activities into class. The source of the problem is the way that the public school system, especially within highly competitive districts, emphasizes grades and perceived intelligence over deep learning. These extrinsic motivators lessen student desire to take on creative opportunities.

While 89.2 percent of surveyed students reported that they enjoy creative projects in school, my observations of students repeatedly demanding more specific directions or copying other people's ideas lead me to believe that some of those students likely claim to enjoy creative activities because they can take them less seriously and get a high grade.

According to the *Child Creativity Lab Organization* (CCL), data from a 2010 report and 2017 follow-up study says that "children have become less emotionally expressive ... less imaginative, less unconventional, less lively and passionate, less perceptive, less apt to connect seemingly irrelevant things, less synthesizing, and less likely to see things from a different angle."

Students' declining ability to come up with unique ideas and interpretations could be a result of easy access to the internet and artificial intelligence, which can give people the answers before they generate ideas on their own.

MIND Research Institute research shows that the learning will resonate more when teachers give students autonomy to create something that establishes a personal connection to course material. In a study conducted by the institute, a group asked to solve a math problem given guidance was found to be less able to solve a similar problem six days later than a group directed to solve the first problem creatively, without guidance. This displays how forms of learn-

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A Case for the Curious

A jack of all trades is better than a master of one

Gwyneth Lee | Staff Writer

Graphic by Bo Chevaleau

About a year ago, I decided to start playing the guitar and violin, on top of the ukulele. My mom thought I should stick with the ukulele, reciting the idiom "jack of all trades, master of none." However, the idiom has a second, lesser-known part: "but oftentimes better than master of one."

This is not the only aspect of my life where I have felt the need to find a focus. When choosing classes or finding clubs, I always feel the pressure to create a coherent personality in the back of my mind, a story for colleges to follow. If I want to study medicine, I should have a biological-sciences-heavy course load. I should disregard my smaller interests in music or rhetoric. I should construct a persona and confine myself to its walls of interest.

But why should we stifle curiosity if the greater intention is education? If I fail to pursue my passions now, will I get another chance? Or does it make more sense to continue to ignore smaller interests and focus on the bigger picture?

Over time, society's idea of accomplishment and what it takes to be successful has changed, and with it, the original "jack of all trades" saying.

A recent Massachusetts Institute of Technology panel revealed that some students train to fit the current, specific needs of the industries they plan on joining. Some panelists in medical fields stated they partner with colleges to offer short-term training to students, focusing on filling technical vacancies in their departments and shaping workers that fit their needs.

However, versatility and one's ability to adapt to different environments will not be the downfall of their success, but rather, it is essential to their growth. People should be relieved of the pressure to pursue a single passion for the rest of their lives as we reclaim "jack of all trades."

Cultivating and acting on multiple interests has many benefits, especially considering that a career is one domain of a person's life and should not dictate it entirely.

According to *Forbes*, exploring interests can lead to uncovering new ideas and is a low-risk investment into the enjoyment of one's life. They can push one towards other aspects of their life and clue one into other places to take their career. Following hobbies can be a simple way to invest energy and time into interests.

Not all work needs to be productive. Exploring many interests could mean exploring one's passions, or it could mean seeking a better understanding of subjects of interest, even just slightly. One does not need to be completely passionate about something to want to look deeper into it.

An *Insights Magazine* publication, from Life Management Science Labs, found that hobbies enhance mood, stimulate creativity, and reduce cognitive decline by acting as a form of stress management and instilling a sense of self-fulfillment. Focusing on interests outside of work fosters an environment that acts as an escape from everyday pressures and tensions, allowing for better concentration.

Additionally, pursuing activities outside of one's work increases productivity. While this might seem counterintuitive, pursuing other interests has this effect because it reduces burnout and incites energy and imagination.

Despite the evidence that extracurriculars can help productivity, there still is an argument against diverse interests. It stems from the concept of pressuring

individuals to specialize so that they excel within a singular focus. In some cases, success is obtained by achieving mastery in a field through dedicating hours of practice to a single subject. However, many of these success stories are outliers and cannot be applied to a large-scale audience.

Oftentimes, specialization leads to burnout. The high expectations to surpass standards can foster an isolating feeling that takes away from a person's overall worth, determining their value solely on their performance in a singular aspect of their life.

According to *Bizfluent*, a social media network of business owners, specialization can lead to complacency and inflexibility. A repetitive routine with no variation can lead to boredom, and focusing on a single aspect of a task prevents the possibility of becoming multifaceted and able to adapt and work in unpredictable environments.

In order to support generalization, we need to normalize pursuing multiple interests. Students do not need to pursue a single passion, and we should recognize that.

Opportunities such as double majoring or dual degrees, give students the chance to gain a more extensive education. It also gives students more career protection because they can become well-versed in a broader range of subjects.

The *National Survey of College Graduates* held a study in 2003 which revealed that on average, double majoring increased earnings by 2.3 percent in comparison to single-major students.

By advocating for students to focus on multiple subjects at once, we can lead them to become more successful without having to forfeit their passions.

Beyond students and their education, society should encourage everyone to pursue their interests. In terms of hobbies, there are many ways to pursue non-work-related interests. According to *Insights Magazine*, a way to do this is by taking time out of one's typical routine, even when it feels difficult, to explore new tasks. New experiences can help to develop innovative skills that contribute to one's personal development.

About a year ago, I started playing guitar and violin, on top of the ukulele, and became a better musician because of it. Although I have no intent of pursuing a career in music, it is still an opportunity for me to expand my knowledge of music and enjoy myself. My hobbies do not need to transpire into something bigger or play a larger role in my life.

Blueprint Graphic/Neve Murphy

We need to create environments where students are encouraged to learn about anything they inquire about, even when it does not align with their other interests. We cannot place a cap on curiosity.

Creativity in Schools

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ing that stress individual thought lead to long-term comprehension of material.

It frustrates me that as soon as an exam has passed, the information that I spent hours studying feels disconnected. The material seemed relevant only in order to score well on the test rather than to gain a deeper understanding, causing me to forget it easily. On the other hand, when I can express the knowledge I gained creatively I feel motivated to understand the material on a deeper level.

This deeper understanding allows students to actively use their knowledge to guide their views instead of forgetting it. Students should be able to prioritize learning in a meaningful way over learning to score well on an exam. Exams should reward students who can go a step further and use their knowledge to solve problems or see a new interpretation, rather than favor students who can memorize information.

Furthermore, creativity is necessary beyond retaining knowledge as it is a skill that sets people up for future success. The CCL describes a 2010 IBM Global Survey in which more than 1500 CEOs from 60 countries and 33 industries worldwide selected creativity as "the most crucial factor for future success".

In the long term, all high school courses regardless of level need to prioritize teaching creative thinking skills equally if not more often than analytical and critical thinking skills. This way, students may begin to associate what they are learning with their own values and have the ability to apply this skill to various aspects of their lives.

Until creativity is further enforced in classrooms, students should keep an open mind toward opportunities to develop their creativity and remember the value of thinking independently without outside expectations or opinions influencing them.

As author and professor John A. Shedd said, "A ship is safe in harbor, but that's not what ships are built for." Those who stay in "harbor" are those who have internalized the numbers that supposedly calculate one's intelligence: rankings, test grades, and GPAs. However, these factors do not speak to an individual's potential. We can use our creativity to explore and discover our own way to make an impact in the world.

The Power of Vulnerability

A dive into the repercussions of discouraging emotional expression

Mika Katznelson | Staff Writer

Graphic by Bo Chevaleau

The last time I cried at school was in third grade when my teacher handed me back my spelling test and said, "Mika, this isn't like you." Something inside me just snapped and giant tears ran down my face. One of the girls in my class pointed at me and started whispering to her friends. After that, I swore to myself that I would never break again.

In the years following, I kept that promise. Even when I had a teacher notorious for making kids cry, I never let myself shed a tear. Have I ever felt sad or scared? Of course, but I always thought, "it will only get worse if I cry." After reflecting on my mindset, I realized that my inability to express myself stemmed from how my emotional expressions were perceived in the past.

As we get older, we tend to stop ourselves from expressing our honest emotions. A study by the Stanford Culture and Emotional Lab found that people suppress their emotions more and more as they age. There are numerous reasons for this, from pressure to fit in, to a fear of repercussions. However, this suppression prolongs the issue in the long run, creating more emotional damage. In order to create an emotionally aware and stable society, it is crucial to remove the stereotypes and stigma around emotional expression and encourage people to express what they feel, regardless of how big or small.

This problem begins in youth as kids are constantly told to be quiet when acting out. Phrases like "you're okay" also reinforce this idea of dismissing one's emotions. This creates a society in which individuals believe it is not acceptable to outwardly express how they feel.

This mindset circulates in society and continues to have an effect into adolescence and adulthood. In a *Blueprint* survey of 130 Acalanes student respondents, 59.2 percent of student respondents stated that they do not believe they can fully express themselves at school, reflecting the early impact of societal expectations around emotional expression.

A similar pattern is seen in professional settings. A study conducted by professors Kimberly Elsback and Beth Bechky at the University of California, Davis observed that people who show emotion at work are less likely to receive a promotion because they seem weak or unstable to supervisors. This bias disproportionately affects women who are frequently labeled to be emotionally vulnerable and thus less effective employees.

The stigma surrounding emotional expression extends from classrooms to the workplace, shaping how individuals navigate their environments. People are discouraged from expressing themselves openly, perpetuating a culture that correlates emotional restraint with stability or competence. By internalizing these norms, people may feel disconnected from their work environment and those around them.

Social media also plays a huge role by creating unreasonable expectations of how one's life should be. People constantly share how amazing their lives are and present an image of being put together. This creates a stigma surrounding distress in one's life and teaches people that they should not present their troubles publicly. In the same *Blueprint* survey, 76.9 percent of students stated that social media impacted the way they expressed themselves in public.

While social media attempts to help fuel human connection, overuse can lead to damaging effects. A Yale Medicine study found that American teens, ages 12 through 15, who used social media over three hours each day faced twice the risk of having negative mental health outcomes.

However, social media is not entirely negative. Small amounts of social media can actually be beneficial. An American Academy of Pediatrics study found that people with a 30-minute time limit on social media usage had fewer depression symptoms than the groups who did not use social media. However, the average amount of time teens spend on social media is 4.8 hours per day, making the impact more negative than positive.

Contrary to the way society has portrayed crying, it can actually have natural benefits for mental and physical health. Lana Burgess states in the medical article "Eight Benefits of Crying: Why it is Good to Shed a Few Tears" that displaying emotion has a variety of positive outcomes. Shedding tears releases oxytocin and endorphins which cause people to feel good and reduce pain. In addition, crying in response to stress reduces stress hormones, relieving the feelings of anxiety that cause the initial reaction.

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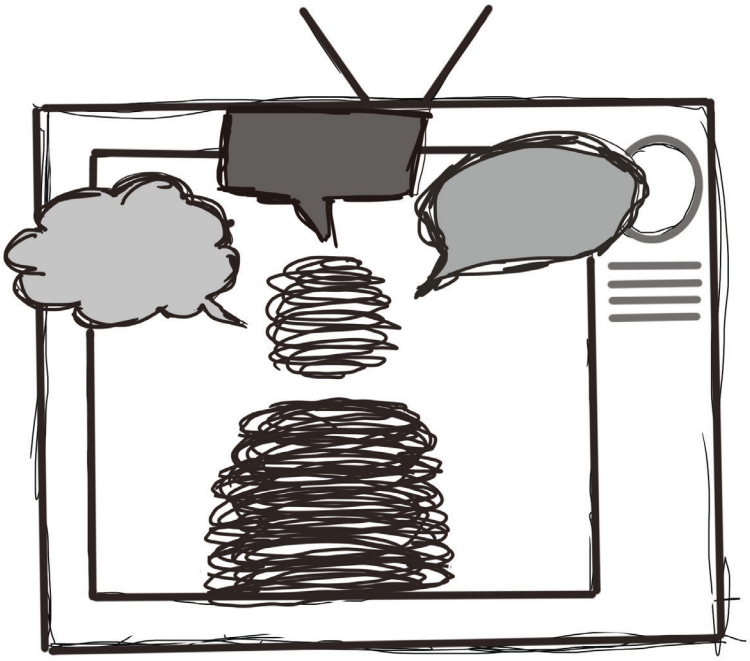
The Adversity of American Apathy

A guide to a better social life

Grace Gallacher | Opinion Copy Editor
Graphic by Cade McAlister



"Don't wanna be an American idiot / Don't want a nation under the new media" sang Green Day in response to the media's use of propaganda to create paranoia and xenophobia towards Middle Eastern individuals following the 2001 Sept. 11 attacks. Lead singer Billie Joe Armstrong utilizes his platform to protest Americans falling victim to the biased news and contributing to the divided society it wished to create. Even though the band released "American Idiot" in 2004, now 20 years later, the media's polarization is worse than ever before.

In recent years, oftentimes when discussing politics, the term "polarization" emerges. But what exactly does it mean to be polarized? *Merriam-Webster* defines polarization as "division into two sharply distinct opposites." We mainly see this represented in political parties, so much so that studies by the University of Southern California show that our country has not been this divided since the Civil War. Yet the issue does not end at politics, as polarization hinders social and psychological development.

As for why polarization is an issue, it boils down to one main thing: a lack of empathy. Empathy, as *Merriam-Webster* defines it, is, "the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another." In other words, empathy enables us to relate to those unlike ourselves, whether it is large differences or minor ones that set us apart. Without empathy, we cannot always view our peers as people. This allows us to fall victim to polarizing media, depicting other humans and fellow citizens as our enemies, simply because they hold opposing views.

At a time when our country is immensely divided, empathy is more important than ever. Yet, Americans seem to lack empathy when it comes to politics, social interactions, and understanding others' greater struggles. The media is largely responsible for such apathy towards our fellow peers and citizens, which ultimately leads to a disjointed, divided country.

To understand how the media managed to divide us, it is important to recognize that our apathy started with a stunted cognitive development.

According to the *National Library of Medicine* (NIH), empathy emerges as people have greater awareness of others' experiences, which is typically a result of social interaction. With the pandemic impacting people around the globe, children and adults alike had almost zero in-person interaction with those outside of their homes. Such a phenomenon can contribute to polarization as it can create an echo chamber of homogenous views. Coupled with our increasingly digital society, it is much more difficult to develop the crucial cognitive aspect of empathy, leading to a country full of apathetic citizens.

Empathy is vital for community connection as, according to the *American Psychological Association*, "empathy motivates many types of prosocial behaviors, such as forgiveness, volunteering, and helping, and that it's negatively associated with things like aggression and bullying." The consequences of a lack of empathy have led to a society where people not only refuse to help one another but instead act with increasing hostility. Such apathy not only harms adult and political relations, but children as well, considering *West Palm Beach News* reported a 14 percent increase in bullying from 2019 to 2023.

Although human interaction is important, it can be substituted with adequate reading. According to *Harvard University Press*, literary fiction can provide detailed descriptions of a character's thoughts and feelings, which provides ample opportunity for readers to experience and thereby develop cognitive empathy. Therefore, advanced readings of fiction can help reduce the abundant apathy we experience today.

Unfortunately, our society is lacking in literary interaction as well. According to the National Endowment for the Arts, not only are reading rates declining across age groups, but reading comprehension scores as well. Also, according to *Deseret News*, the rate of kids reading has declined almost 50 percent since 2012. The combination of these factors severely hinders one's ability to develop cognitive empathy as people are not reading nor understanding enough to do so. Even worse, both of these factors decrease individuals' desire to read, creating a positive feedback loop, where each factor furthers the other and ultimately results in a drastic decline in reading.

Both of these societal tragedies have

Blueprint Graphic/Emily Roberts

led to a mass decline in empathy and a country that no longer functions as a united whole, enabling the media, on both sides of the political spectrum, to take advantage of the situation in order to turn a larger profit margin.

News platforms like Microsoft National Broadcast Corporation and Fox often publish news that leans incredibly left and right, respectively, causing their information to communicate only one side of the story, misleading readers and portraying the other party as the enemy. Further, it is not just these networks that are biased. Most other outlets also present slanted stories, likely as a result of political polarization, which makes it much more difficult to find truly neutral media. These biases result in altered political views and an empathetic reduction.

However, switching news channels can reverse some of these symptoms. According to *Boston University Radio*, in a study that switched people's networks from Fox News to CNN, the subjects' Republican views mostly softened and moderated. Since moderate views signal an ability to agree with both parties, switching to less biased news platforms can reduce polarization and work to restore American empathy.

There is a comparable result when people consume their news via social media. Similar to those who watch polarized news as it supports their beliefs, social media platforms are programmed to show users posts that they will interact with, which are most commonly posts they enjoy and/or agree with.

Even though modern American politics are incredibly and increasingly tense, we must remember that those who disagree with us are still human beings. We can disagree with others without dehumanizing them, and we can attempt to educate ourselves and others on issues we are passionate about. We must respect our peers and their beliefs, as everyone is entitled to their own opinion, just as we are to oppose it and attempt to change their views.

Although it may not appear so, our country can compromise. In order to accomplish that, we cannot function with one party represented by the American flag, while the other is embarrassed by it.

Green Day's message is more relevant today than ever. America, unknowingly or not, is subject to the control of the media. To avoid being an "American Idiot," we must recognize this apathy and work to find trustworthy, unbiased, accurate news. All people are capable of change, but to do so, we must start at the beginning: with empathy. So, hopefully, our country will have all citizens proud to live under the star-spangled banner once again.

Emotional Expression

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While the process of eliminating the stigma surrounding crying may be difficult, it is a process we must attempt. We must embrace our emotions and not be afraid to experience them. Processing one's emotions is a more effective way to feel better than trying to suppress them.

This stigma is ingrained in our society and will be difficult to correct but if people strive to avoid responding to expressing negative emotions rudely, then others will feel less embarrassed or antagonized when feeling these emotions. Furthermore, if people are brave about showing their emotions in public, it may help motivate others to do the same.

It is also important to recognize the limited scope that social media presents. Influencers and other users use these platforms to highlight certain aspects of their lives and are not a full reflection of reality. Acknowledging this can help individuals avoid comparing themselves to those they see online. Rather than putting themselves down people should remember that everyone experiences challenges, even if it is not fully visible online. By reframing how we view social media, we can foster a healthier mindset and reduce pressure to meet unrealistic standards.

I am working to feel more confident with being vulnerable because all of the time that I bottled up my emotions, I was hurting instead of helping myself. While the idea of crying in class may seem uncomfortable to many of us, this vulnerability may help us and others feel more calm and confident.

Competing Beyond High School

Student-athletes outside of school-sponsored sports

Cameron Thornton, Owen Curley, Will Miller, and Max Trexler | Print Sports Editor and Staff Writers

Courtesy Photo by Teagan Frase

Many Acalanes students try on colors other than blue or white, choosing to pursue a sport that the school does not offer.

While the Acalanes Athletics Department offers a wide range of sports, many students participate in sports outside of school programs or introduce their sport to Acalanes by forming clubs.

The Athletics Department caters to student interest by supporting sports that have high popularity within the student body, adding or removing programs based on whether or not they are in high demand. Additionally, the school must have enough resources to support each sport.

"We have 25 [sports] programs ... [and] obviously flag football and beach volleyball are newer. [The sports the school provides are] based on demand. It also is based on [if] we have the ability to do it. For example, we don't have gymnastics anymore ... that went away mostly because of demand. So it depends on what the demand is and if we're capable of doing it," Athletic Director Randy Takahashi said.

While Acalanes cannot include a program for every sport, there are alternative options for student-athletes whose sports are not supported by the school, including starting a club. These clubs are composed of Acalanes students and can hold meetings on campus, however, they are not formally part of the Athletics Department.

"The sports that we have in the Athletics Department are ones that are sponored by the district, meaning that we have systems in place so that we have programs, coaches, equipment, etcetera. The ones that are clubs ... are a club through leadership ... and they compete as an Acalanes club but not as an Acalanes Athletic Department team," Takahashi said.

Despite the hard work and dedication that goes into any sport, only athletes participating in an Acalanes Athletics Department program are eligible to use their participation hours for Athletic Physical Education (PE) credits. For athletes outside of the school athletics programs, not being able to use their practice and competition hours towards the two-year Athletic PE requirement can be an inconvenience.

"A problem that I had was that [sailing club] didn't count towards sports credits, so I had to take a year of yoga to fill in that gap," Sailing Club captain and senior Kaivo Kadai said.

The Athletics Department regulates which sports are eligible for Athletic PE, ensuring that only sports under its jurisdiction are effectively and correctly managed.

"The intent of [Athletic PE] was for high school athletes that are participating within the high school itself [to] have a chance to use that in place of PE. Those are programs that we run, and we know exactly how many hours they put into it. We know exactly what's being done in those programs, and so it was not offered to outside participation because it isn't part of the high school. That's why it's only for participation within the high school Athletics Department," Takahashi said.

For some athletes participating in non-Acalanes sports, being ineligible for Athletic PE can push them to find other sources of PE credits and leave others feeling that the school does not acknowledge well the time they put into their sport.

"It's definitely frustrating that I don't get athletic PE credit for [my sport] because I did diving as my PE credit, which was super fun, but I definitely dedicate more time to gymnastics year round, so it feels like I don't get recognized for the work that I put into that sport," gymnast and junior Teagan Frase said.

Since Acalanes chooses to sponsor sports with high student interest, common sports tend to draw more attention within the school community. On the other hand, athletes who participate in less popular sports that are not school-sponsored do not tend to receive the same amount of recognition for their dedication and hard work.

"I think people only usually think about sports at your school, and I think there's a lot of people who play sports that aren't affiliated with Acalanes and people just assume they don't play any sports," rugby player and junior Thomas Parrot said.

Although these athletes may not receive much support from the school community, many can look to family and friends for sup-

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Meet the Winter Sports Captains

Delving into team captains' roles and goals for their season

Zoe Stafford, Hanna Wisniewska, and Donovan McGrath
| Azure Editor-in-Chief and Social Media Managers
Photos by Haley Chelemedos

Men's Basketball: Maddox Malm, Brady Quinn, Ian Salmon, and Gavin Dodge

As the men's basketball season kicks off, senior captains Maddox Malm, Brady Quinn, and Ian Salmon and junior captain Gavin Dodge look to instill a culture of comradery into the program.

"I [try] to encourage people to be good teammates and [make] sure everyone is playing for the people to their right and their left. [Teamwork] is more than just something we talk about, a lot of it is about how we're playing for more than just ourselves as a team game," Quinn said.

For the captains, team bonding serves as a way to connect the team, forging a deep sense of trust among the players, which is crucial during game time.

"Before big league games, we have team dinners. We also take a trip down to San Diego, where we'll spend the whole time together, having fun and just getting closer as a team so that we trust each other when we're all on the court," Dodge said.

In addition to promoting a positive team culture, they also serve as liaisons by working together with the coaches in order to pass information along to other players.

"I work … as a connection between Coach Powers and the rest of the team in our group chat. I can send out information about practices or games, and kind of get the perspectives from both sides to figure out a happy medium," Quinn said.

The captains look to this upcoming season with optimism and determination, preparing the team for a successful year.

"This is an opportunity to do something special with a group of guys that I enjoy spending time with and playing with. We're out here striving to reach the potential I know we're capable of," Dodge said.

Women's Basketball: Sophie Chinn*, Karyss (KK) Lacanlale, and Alexis Le

This basketball season, senior captains Sophie Chinn and KK Lacanlale and junior captain Alexis Le plan to unite the team and bond with underclassmen.

"I would like [to be] connecting more with the lowerclassmen and making sure they feel involved and connected with all of our upperclassmen because there's just so many of us," Le said.

To start strong, the women's basketball team held a team retreat to set goals for the upcoming season. Team bonding is important to the captains because it can bring the team closer and help improve its dynamic.

"We had our team retreat on Saturday [Nov. 9], and I think out of the past three years … this has been the most successful retreat. We hope we can include more team bondings this month, but I think our retreat was important to move this team forward because it made sure we were all committed to the same goals," Lacanlale said.

The captains plan to support their teammates, bring strong leadership to the team, and uplift other players.

"We have two freshmen. [Alexis] is back from her injury, and Sophie is making her way back. I'm consistently communicating on and off the court so the girls know I'm here for them," Lacanlale said.

Men's Soccer: Ben Pecci* and Jonny Roth

Going into their final season at Acalanes, men's soccer senior captains Ben Pecci and Jonny Roth are excited to lead the team as they strive for a triumphant season.

"I plan to be a confident leader for the team and problem solve throughout games and practices, hoping to lead the team to win league," Pecci said.

The captains also plan to encourage the players to stay focused on meeting the team's goals.

"My role this year is to keep the boys motivated on their goal because we have plenty of talent so it's expected that we play well, but it's easy to lose focus and kind of be complacent," Roth said.

The captains value the team because of their genuine passion for the sport and also due to the sense of community it brings.

"I love the reward of scoring a goal or making a really nice pass. Psychologically, it just feels really good. I also like the camaraderie of the team," Roth said.

The captains hope to utilize their team chemistry to improve as the season progresses and plan to make the most of their last season of high school soccer.

"I am most looking forward to playing with friends and teammates from school as we don't play together all year because we are on different clubs. We have good chemistry on and off the field," Pecci said.

Women's Soccer: Lucca DeBiasse (not pictured), Demi Woods, and Tori Hiatt

As the women's soccer season gets into swing, senior captains Luca DeBiasse and Demi Woods and junior captain Tori Hiatt strive to create a united team and community.

"[I hope to] encourage and uplift all my teammates while at the same time making sure we are the best team we can be. I think it's really important to not take things too seriously and always have fun but also continue to work hard," DeBiasse said.

Each captain is prepared to bring everything they have to the team, contributing their own unique skills to help the team environment.

"I need to really set an example of mind-

set. I want to get people close together and have a good community," Hiatt said.

Due to injury, Woods is unable to participate on the field but is excited to help her teammates by contributing to a positive and collaborative team environment.

"[Soccer is] a team sport and we can't do it without everyone working together ... I'm focusing on being very positive and getting a good team chemistry," Woods said.

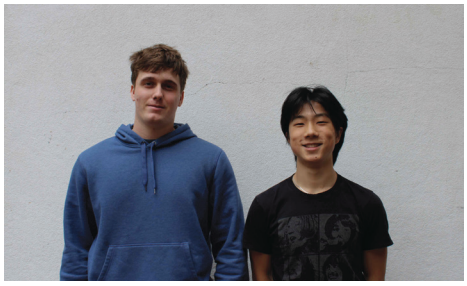
The captains enjoy the competitive aspect of soccer as well as the physical and mental challenges that the sport provides.

"I feel like [soccer] is a separate part of my life. I get to control it. It's my own ability and skill. I like how intense it is [and I like] pushing myself to be better," Hiatt said.

Entering their final season at Acalanes, DeBiasse and Woods prepare to say goodbye to their teammates.

"I'm really looking forward to senior night. I've been playing with a lot of my friends for so long so it's going to be really sad but really exciting to see what everyone's plans are," Woods said.

Wrestling: Ian Saftner, Marley Oh, and Gwyneth Lee* (not pictured)



Wrestling captains senior Ian Saftner, junior Marley Oh, and sophomore captain Gwyneth Lee are excited to be a part of the growing interest surrounding the Acalanes wrestling program as they watch the team continue to develop.

"Our past few years we've had a pretty small team, maybe around 20 kids, but this year we have around 35. It's just really cool being part of an environment where there's a lot of people who support the programs and help us grow," Oh said.

Wrestling is a physically taxing sport, however, the captains embrace this aspect and enjoy the challenge, helping them develop both physically and mentally.

"I feel like a lot of the time people complain about how hard [the sport] is. A lot of athletes won't admit it, but wrestling is the hardest sport by far. But, I think that that's something I really enjoy. Having to push myself to my limits to become better and get better physically and mentally," Oh said.

The captains are responsible for keeping the team on track and encouraging its members to push themselves and progress.

"Our practice is time we have to get better as a team and individually, so if we're not spending that time really putting 100 percent effort in then we're not going to grow. It's my job to make sure we're staying on task and putting in that effort to grow," Oh said.

The captains encourage students to join the wrestling team because it is open to all and offers a great way to get stronger and meet new people.

"[Wrestling] is the only winter no-cut sport, so if you don't have a sport to do in the winter come try it out. No experience is necessary. It's a great chance to improve and make friends," Oh said.

***Blueprint** would like to acknowledge that Ben Pecci's sister, Natalie Pecci, is a part of* **Blueprint** *staff.* **Blueprint** *would also like to acknowledge that Sophie Chinn and Gwyneth Lee are members of* **Blueprint** *staff.*

Competing Beyond High School

Continued from 39

port and guidance.

"I think the recognition that [students who play sports outside of school] get isn't from Acalanes. I think that we get recognition from our coaches and our teammates and our friends who show up to our meets, and our families. But, I definitely don't get recognition for my sport in school unless I'm tumbling at the rallies or something like that," Frase said.

Most student-athletes that participate in school-sponsored sports have the convenience of practicing on campus. However, athletes participating in a sport outside of school do not have that privilege. Long practice hours coupled with extended commuting times can put these athletes at a disadvantage when trying to manage their academic and athletic commitments.

Blueprint Photo/Molly Connelly

"I do nine hours a week, but it's a long commute to Oakland and back, so I probably dedicate around 12 hours a week to my sport ... I don't have as much time to do homework and the long commute is a lot harder versus when I could just do it here," Frase said.

Finding a good balance between time dedicated to sports and school is a common challenge for all student-athletes but is particularly difficult for athletes that participate in non-school sports.

"[Managing my sport] is definitely hard because I am at practice for two and half hours, and I get home around eight. I don't have a lot of time for homework, so I go to bed pretty late," rower and sophomore Ingrid Flory said.

Despite the difficulties of participating in a sport that is not offered by the school, the athletes that are a part of these non-school athletics programs get unique opportunities that they would not otherwise get in a school-sponsored sport.

Courtesy Photo/Reid Martin

"You get to meet a lot of kids not from your school, and it's really beneficial because when you do play them in football or other sports, you get to see them," Parrot said.

Outside of the Acalanes community, these athletes are able to branch out and form new connections with a wide range of people who share similar athletic interests.

"I get to make friends with a lot of people I would never meet. I have friends that are as young as ten years old and as old as 20 and they all live in Oakland and Alameda, and I never would have gotten to know them if I hadn't done an outside sport, especially because I'm also so new to this gym ... It's really broadened my horizons, and I've met so many people," Frase said.

SPORTS BEATS

Men's Basketball

Molly Jones | Print Photo Story Editor

Courtesy Photo/Nicole Malm
Brady Quinn shoots a layup against Piedmont.

The men's basketball team (3-1 overall, 0-0 league) started off pre-season games by beating Foothill High School 84-65 on Nov. 30. The team then went on beat Westmoor 90-51 on Dec. 5 and competed in the Piedmont High School tournament from Dec. 6-7.

Acalanes competed against Foothill at home with notable performances by junior Gavin Dodge who scored 26 points and junior Cameron Hood who scored 23 points.

The team welcomes back many players who will continue to be of value to the team this season.

"This team has eight players that played significant minutes last year… this [is] so valuable. Beyond the year of experience, all eight of the players were committed to improvement in the offseason and enter the season more skilled and more confident," Head Coach Bill Powers said.

Men's Soccer

Shiraz Kamran | Staff Writer

Blueprint Photo/Haley Chelemedos
Senior Ben Pecci dashes down the field.

The men's soccer team (1-0 overall, 0-0 league) start off their 2024 campaign aiming for success and trying to build off of a North Coast Section run from last season.

The team started their season with a 1-0 win in a scrimmage against Richmond High School on Dec. 3. They then defeated Pinole Valley High School 2-0 on Dec. 6.

Their scrimmage against Richmond High School was highly anticipated and is a tradition to kick off the season.

"One of the things that we're really excited about is every year when we scrimmage Richmond. We do not have referees, so the boys monitor themselves on the field, and we've never had an issue … We've probably done this for at least 12 years, and it speaks well to their program and … to the value of our own players as well," men's soccer head coach Paul Curtis said.

With the whole season ahead of them, the Acalanes men's soccer team is looking forward to winning against their rivals.

"I'm … excited to play Campolindo because it's always a big game … There's always competition and drama and bad blood which is awesome. I love those games," senior Jonny Roth said.

Women's Basketball

Aamena Shipchandler | Print News Editor

Blueprint Photo/Haley Chelemedos
Ariana Hallstrom puts up a jumper against Riordan.

The women's basketball team (3-0 overall, 0-0 league) starts the season off strong, looking to repeat successes from last year.

The team began with the Pinole Valley Invitational scrimmage tournament on Nov. 16, in which they beat Oakland Tech, Folsom, and California High School and lost to Saint Mary's High School of Stockton. On Nov. 23, the team scrimmaged San Ramon Valley and Archbishop Mitty.

The Dons played Archbishop Riordan at home on Dec. 26, for their foundation game, winning with a score of 57-49.

The team will have its first league game on Nov. 20 against Benicia.

With players coming back from injuries, as well as returning players and some new freshmen, the team looks to have a successful season.

"I'm feeling pretty good about this season. We have more players than we did last season, and our strengths are definitely our speed, our aggression, and our energy," women's basketball captain and senior KK Lacanlale said.

Women's Soccer

James Hanzel | Staff Writer

Blueprint Photo/Haley Chelemedos
Alex Salazar kicks the ball down field in a match against Windsor.

As the women's soccer team (0-1 overall, 0-0 league) looks to build off of an North Coast Section run last season, they start the season with multiple non-league games to tune up before a highly anticipated league slate.

The team began the season at home against Windsor on Dec. 4, the game ending with a tie of 1-1.

On Dec. 6 the Dons hosted Cardinal Newman, and the match ended in a draw. The Dons have league games to look forward to against Clayton Valley Charter on Jan. 9 and Benicia High School on Jan. 14.

The team has laid out its priorities and commitments to start the season off on a good foot and prepare for their ultimate season goals.

"We need to focus on having good team chemistry and building a collective and united culture. Everyone is going to have to work hard for themselves and the team to be successful," women's soccer head coach Alex Avelar said.

Wrestling

Max Trexler | Staff Writer

Contributing Photo/Marley Oh
Edreece Warres wins his match at the James Logan Colt Classic Tournament.

The Acalanes wrestling team enters the season with optimism to grow and improve together as a team.

With a lot of new faces joining the team, growing and finding an identity early is crucial as the season begins.

With less of an emphasis on winning all their meets and placing first in league, the varsity wrestling team has a different approach going into the season: embracing their younger talent and building for the future.

"We definitely have a lot more potential than last year. [We also] have a lot more freshmen … They have a lot of young potential," senior Roman Betigga said.

The Acalanes wrestling coaches have been explicit on training younger wrestlers and helping develop their skills.

"Personally, expectations this year are pretty similar to last, we're going to have a lot of first year wrestlers in our lineup," wrestling Head Coach Steve Nelson said.

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Crossword

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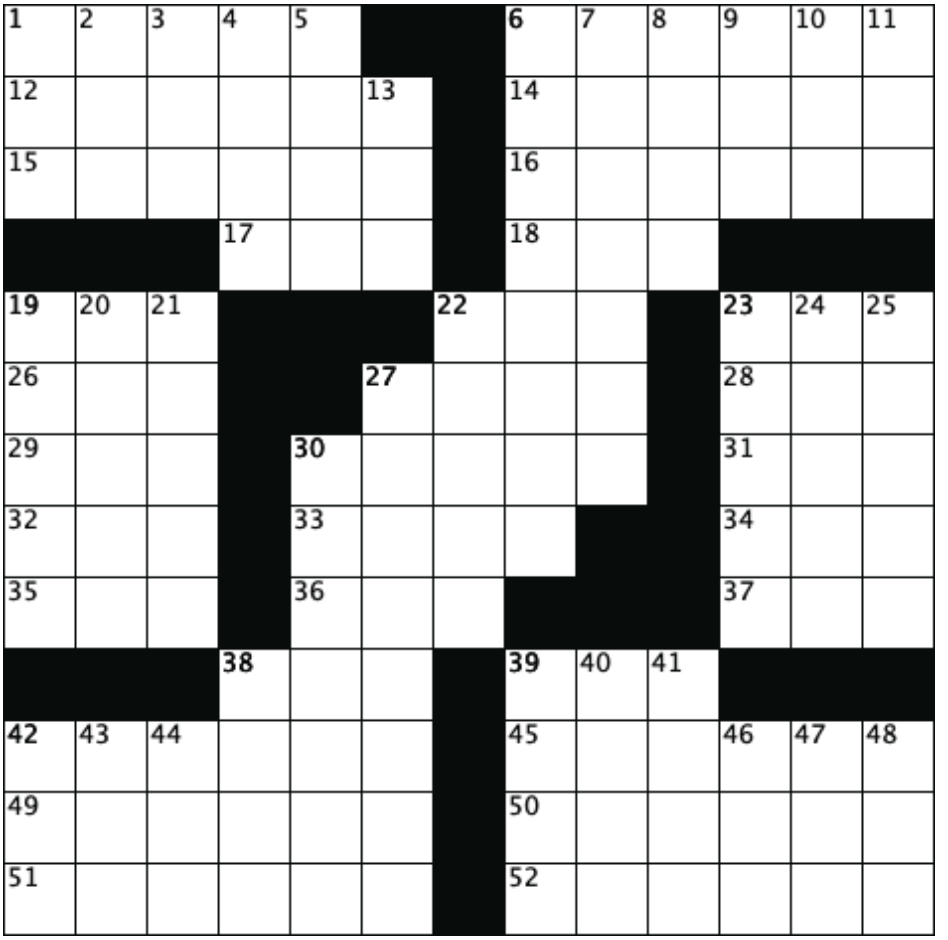

Across:

1. Furniture, for short
6. Father of Renaissance art
12. One of Neil Young's greatest hits
14. Followed
15. Target of *Ocean's 11*
16. What a bird might have done in a tree
17. La Brea ___ pits, LA tourist attraction
18. Gov. association protecting ecosystems
19. Snapshot, for short
22. Badge on high-performance Dodge cars
23. Species of Brian from *Family Guy*
26. "Four score and seven years ____"
27. Unsustainable energy source
28. Opposite of nothing
29. In poor health
30. Filled with cheer
31. Aunt, in Madrid
32. Sign of agreement
33. _____ *Blue*, famous soul album
34. Teslas, for short
35. Message from a distressed ship
36. Public uni. in Dallas
37. _____ Moines, capital of Iowa
38. A period of time in history
39. A feline creature
42. Disliking strongly
45. Refuge
49. Main course
50. Saying, maxim
51. "____ along," walks casually
52. Gave the impression

Down:

1. "What's up ____," Bugs Bunny catchphrase
2. School dept. in charge of literature classes
3. Successor of cassettes
4. To exculde, or lie
5. Frog, in Spanish
6. Army leaders
7. Awkwardly and badly
8. Designer accessory brand
9. King _____, famous pharoah
10. Another word for shirt
11. Like one, three, five, and seven
13. "Neither here ____ there"
19. "Aches and ____"
20. An icy structure
21. Common winter diseases
22. Hard
23. What exes did
24. Common pizza topping
25. What windows are made out of
27. Small houses
30. Band known for "Don't Stop Believing"
38. Gaelic term for Ireland
39. D.C.'s hockey team
40. Arthur ____, famous tennis player
41. Ancient Lebanesse city
42. What seamstresses do to the edges of garments
43. A rotation around the sun, in Spanish
44. When a computer reads writing (initialism)
46. To clock someone
47. Purpose
48 *Chicago* ____, NBC show

Check Blueprint *online for Crossword answers!*

ATHLETES OF THE ISSUE

Courtesy Photo/Nicole Malm
Maddox Malm faces off against Westmoor.

Ariana Hallstrom

Jack Gebhardt | Head Copy Editor

With the women's basketball team (3-0 overall, 0-0 league) off to a great start, senior guard and California State University San Bernardino women's basketball commit Ariana Hallstrom seems to be ahead of the game and set to have an amazing season.

The guard's teammates recognize the threat she poses on the court, acknowledging her ability to do well on both sides of the ball.

"Ari is very active on both offense and defense, being a super aggressive defender and a dangerous player on offense. She drives hard on offense, but also has a really good pull up jumper and three [pointer]. Her hands are constantly active on defense, and her feet are always moving," senior Dulci Vail said.

With big games approaching, Hallstrom's coaches attribute part of the team's performance to the energy and passion she shows on the court, making her a key asset in the season ahead.

"Ariana Hallstrom is a relentless competitor. She will compete from the jump ball to the last horn. When Ari steps on the court, she brings a level of confidence that is contagious, therefore raising the level of play for the rest of our team," Head Coach Margaret Gartner said.

**Sophie Chinn, Online Editor-In-Chief, contributed interviews to this piece.*

Maddox Malm

Jake Colaco | Head Section Editor

As the men's basketball team (3-1 overall, 0-0 league) begins its season, senior captain Maddox Malm looks to be a significant producer for the team.

Malm has made significant strides in his game since the beginning of his high school career. His teammates and coaches recognize his hard work and dedication to developing as a player.

"He has improved tremendously over the years, not just with his play, but overall with his mindset. He has worked incredibly hard to improve his game, and it really shows," senior Joe Reidenbach said.

Malm's talents on both sides of the ball make him a tremendous asset to the team. His strong shooting and reliable defense are some of his more notable characteristics.

"Maddox is a very versatile player that can play various positions on the team, but he is especially good at shooting," Reidenbach said.

Malm contributes significantly to the team's culture, which has helped him earn a captain role. He constantly works hard to be the best teammate he can be on and off the court.

"He is attempting to be the best leader for the team and working hard to be a great teammate," Head Coach Bill Powers said.

Contributing Photo/Cimon Yiannikos
Ariana Hallstrom shoots a three-pointer in the third quarter.

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